

Jesus, Our True Worship Leader

Ron Man¹

“What God requires, He provides”

In Galatians 3:3, Paul poses to his readers a rhetorical question:

Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?²

To Paul the obvious answer is: Having begun by the Spirit (through “hearing with faith,” Gal 3:2), *of course* you’re not now perfected by the flesh! In fact, Paul declares that it would be “foolish” for the Galatians to think so. Having begun by the Spirit, the continuing work of being perfected will be undergirded by the Spirit as well.

Paul is highlighting an important principle of the Christian faith: God commits Himself to complete the good work He has begun in us (Phil 1:6). The Holy Spirit comes alongside to work in us and with us in the process of living the Christian life.

This is a crucial distinctive of New Testament Christianity, one which is borne out by a number of different passages, for example:

Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. (Rom 8:26) (We don’t even know how to pray, but the Spirit will come alongside and help us.)

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:12–13) (We work out our salvation, but God is working in us, too.)

For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me. (Col 1:29) (Paul toils and struggles, but God provides strength.)

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² Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2001).

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age. (Titus 2:11–12) (The grace of God trains us for growth.)

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. (1 Cor 15:10) (Paul worked harder than all, yet not alone; the grace of God enabled him.)

Test everything; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil. Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it. (1 Thess 5:21–24) (We are to live holy lives, yet God is the One upon whom we can depend to sanctify us.)

Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do His will, working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. (Heb 13:20–21) (We are to do God's will, yet the writer prays that He will equip us to do so; we are to live in a manner pleasing to the Lord, yet He will work that in us.)

The purpose in piling up so many passages is to demonstrate the prevalence of this New Testament theme of grace: God doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves; or, in the words of Augustine, "What God requires, He provides."

God requires perfect holiness in order to enter heaven. We do not have that in ourselves, but in His grace Christ has provided that holiness for us. That is God's grace for our salvation. God also wants us to live a holy life on earth (1 Peter 1:15–16). We certainly can't do that ourselves, but, as we have just seen, God has promised to help those who are in Christ in that quest; that is God's grace for our sanctification.

God also deserves, and demands, perfect worship. What we want to examine here is God's wonderful provision for us in that arena as well: we want to consider God's grace for our worship. What God requires of our worship, He provides for us in Jesus Christ.

Jesus, Our High Priest

Jesus' High Priestly ministry was *not* completed when He offered Himself as the once-for-all and once-for-all-time sacrifice for sin. A major emphasis of the book of Hebrews is the continuing ministry of our living High Priest.³ The writer makes clear that "we *have* [not *had*] a great high priest" in Jesus Christ:

³ These verses in Hebrews all make reference to the *present* ministry of Christ: 2:12, 18; 3:1; 4:14–16; 7:25; 8:1–2; 8:6; 9:24; 10:21; 13:15, 21.

Since then we **have** a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not **have** a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. (4:14–15)

Now the point in what we are saying is this: we **have** such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven. (8:1)

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, and since we **have** a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near . . . (10:19–22)

The writer also makes clear that Jesus (unlike the priests of old) holds His priestly office *forever*:

As He says also in another place, “You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek.” (5:6, quoting Psalm 110:4)

Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest **forever** after the order of Melchizedek. (6:20)

For it is witnessed of Him, “You are a priest **forever**, after the order of Melchizedek.” (7:17)

But this one was made a priest with an oath by the one who said to Him: “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest **forever**.’” (7:21)

The former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers because they were prevented by death from continuing, but Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues **forever**, holds His priesthood permanently. Therefore He is able also to save **forever** those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (7:23–25, NASB)

Consequently, the writer, in his climactic “therefore” verses of application in chapter 10, cites two reasons we can draw near to God in worship:

Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, [Reason 1: because of the past work of Christ] and since we have a great priest over the house of God, [Reason 2: because of the present, priestly work of Christ] let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (10:19–22)

Jesus, Our Mediator

Similarly, Paul states in no uncertain terms that “there is one God, and one Mediator between man and God, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 2:5).⁴ Not that Jesus *was*, but *is* the “one Mediator between man and God.” As our living High Priest, and as still a man, He continues to mediate between humanity and God.

This is important historically, as well as theologically, because of what has been pointed out about the increasing neglect during the Middle Ages of Christ’s continuing humanity. Geoffrey Wainwright cites Josef Jungmann in this regard:

Jungmann . . . showed how anti-Arian motives eventually came to shift the emphasis from the human Christ, or the incarnate Son in His continuing mediatorial function, to the Son as the Second Person of the Trinity and therefore himself a recipient of worship. . . . Jungmann proved conclusively from later liturgies that the liturgical result of the Arian controversy in both East and West was that “stress was now placed not on what unites us to God (Christ as one of us in His human nature, Christ as our brother), but on what separates us from God (God’s infinite majesty).”⁵

In other words, the crucial defense of Christ’s deity, in the face of dangerous heresies calling it into question, eventually led to a downplaying of Christ’s full and complete (and continuing) humanity. Hence, the Church began to develop the idea that access to God was possible only through human agencies, such as a priest, the Virgin Mary, or one of the saints. Thomas F. Torrance puts it this way:

When the Humanity of Christ is depreciated or whenever it is obscured by the sheer majesty of his Deity then the need for some other human mediation creeps in—hence in the Dark and Middle Ages arose the need for a human priesthood to mediate between sinful humanity and the exalted Christ, the majestic Judge and King.⁶

One of the major rallying cries of the Reformation (especially of Calvin) was restoring the concept of the sole priesthood and mediatorship of Christ, without the need for intermediating agents like priests, saints, or Mary. Again Thomas F. Torrance:

At the Reformation this doctrine [justification by Christ] had immediate effect in the overthrow of Roman sacerdotalism—Jesus Christ is our sole Priest. He is the one and only Man who can mediate between us and God, so that we approach God solely through the mediation of the Humanity of Jesus, through his incarnate Priest-

⁴ Some untaught Christians even carry the erroneous idea that Jesus is no longer man: that, once He finished His redemptive work, He returned to His undiminished deity and shed His humanity. The doctrine of the incarnation of course holds that in Jesus Christ perfect deity and perfect humanity are conjoined *forever*. And so Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5 calls Him (post-glorification) “the *man* Christ Jesus.”

⁵ Geoffrey Wainwright, *Doxology: The Praise of God in Worship, Doctrine and Life: A Systematic Theology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 63, citing Josef Jungmann, *The Place of Christ in Liturgical Prayer*.

⁶ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 167.

hood. . . . There was of course no denial of the Deity of Christ by the Reformers—on the contrary they restored the purity of faith in Christ as God through overthrowing the accretions that compromised it; but they also restored the place occupied in the New Testament and the Early Church by the Humanity of Christ, as He who took our human nature in order to be our Priest, as He who takes our side and is our Advocate before the judgment of God, and who once and for all has wrought out atonement for us in His sacrifice on the Cross, and therefore as he who eternally stands in for us as our heavenly Mediator and High-Priest.⁷

Two-Way Mediation

In the Old Testament, one finds a double agency of mediation back and forth between God and man, which reflects the foundational biblical pattern of *revelation* and *response*.⁸ God spoke to Moses on the mountain, and his job was to go down and faithfully communicate the Lord's revelation to the people of Israel; he was God's chosen mediator from Himself to man. His brother Aaron (the first High Priest) was to represent, through the sacrificial system, the people in their response of worship back to God; he was the appointed mediator from man to God.

Later in Israel's history one sees a similar pattern: the prophet was to serve as God's mouthpiece,⁹ communicating His revealed message to the people, as mediator between God and man. The priests continued as mediators between man and God, representing the former in their worship response.

In the New Testament, we learn the wonderful truth that Jesus Christ now fills both of those mediatorial roles. As the unique God-man,¹⁰ He mediates both between God and man, and man and God.

⁷ Ibid., 166–67.

⁸ For more on the paradigm of Revelation and Response, so basic to a biblical understanding of worship and all of God's dealings with mankind, see Ronald Man, *Worship Notes 1.5* (May 2006); Ron Man, *Proclamation and Praise: Hebrews 2:12 and the Christology of Worship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007), 47–51; Gary Furr and Milburn Price, *The Dialogue of Worship: Creating Space for Revelation and Response* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 1998).

⁹ We read explicitly that “the word of the Lord came” to the prophets Samuel (1 Sam 15:10), Nathan (2 Sam 7:4; 1 Chron 17:3), Gad (2 Sam 24:11), Jehu (1 Kings 16:1, 7), Elijah (1 Kings 17:2, 8; 18:1; 19:9; 21:17; 21:28), Shemaiah (2 Chron 11:2; 12:7), Isaiah (2 Kings 20:4; Isa 38:4), Jeremiah (Jer 1:2, 4, 11, 13; 2:1; etc.), Ezekiel (Ezek 1:3; 3:16; etc.), Hosea (Hosea 1:1), Joel (Joel 1:1), Jonah (Jonah 1:1; 3:1), Micah (Micah 1:1), Zephaniah (Zeph 1:1), and Zechariah (Zech 1:1,7).

¹⁰ Hebrews 1 focuses on the *deity* of Christ (“He is the radiance of [the Father's] glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power,” v. 3, NASB) and as such is worthy to *receive* worship (“Let all God's angels worship Him,” v. 6). His *humanity* is the focus of Hebrews 2 (“But we see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus,” v. 9a; “For He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why He is not ashamed to call them brothers,” v. 11; “Since

This two-way mediation is beautifully and concisely portrayed in Hebrews 2:12 (as is also the climactic fulfillment of the revelation-response paradigm in Him). Here the writer is quoting from Psalm 22:22,¹¹ though he states that these are the words of Christ Himself, speaking to His Father:

[Revelation: God to man]
“I will proclaim Your name to My brethren;

[Response: man to God]
and in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise.”

Jesus, the Revealer of the Father

In the first half of the verse, Jesus speaks of His ministry of proclamation of God's Name (that is, of His Person and nature), of mediating the revelation of God to man. This clearly was His role during His earthly sojourn:

No one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him. (Matt 11:27b, NASB)

No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him. (John 1:18, NASB)

For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God. (John 3:34a, NASB)

But in Hebrews 2:12, Jesus (speaking post-cross, post-glorification) claims a continuing role in this regard. He hinted at this as He prayed to His Father in the upper room on the night before His crucifixion (looking beyond the cross and the resurrection):

I have made Your name known to them, and **will make it known.** (John 17:26a, NASB)

And in the opening statement of his second volume (the book of Acts), Luke hearkens back to his gospel account in this way:

therefore the children share in flesh and blood, He himself likewise partook of the same things,” v. 14a; “Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect,” v. 17a); He is therefore qualified to *give* worship as well (“In the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise,” v. 12b).

¹¹ This Psalm famously foretells the crucifixion of Christ, as He appropriates for Himself the opening cry of verse 1 as He hangs on the cross (“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34). Verse 22, quoted in Hebrews 2:12, is the first verse of the second section of the Psalm, which looks beyond the suffering of the Messiah to the victory to follow (see Man, *Proclamation and Praise*, 8–12).

In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus **began** to do and teach . . . (Acts 1:1)

Luke seems to be implying that in Acts he will relate what Jesus *continued* “to do and to teach”—now through the apostles, other human instruments, and through the Church itself. Jesus’ words in Hebrews 2:12 show that the ministry of revealing the Father is still His ministry: as we preach and teach the Word in any context, we need to be humbly and gratefully aware that we are representing Christ, whose ministry it still is to reveal the Father.

With this perspective in mind, Paul’s familiar words in Colossians 3:16, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly,” come alive in an astonishing way: rather than seeing “of Christ” as merely an objective genitive (the Word *about Christ*), we may well see Paul intending it as a subjective genitive (that is, the Word that comes *from Christ Himself*). The meaning of this verse thus takes on a much deeper, active, and vibrant sense—and indeed we can begin to see just how “richly” that Word may dwell among us!

Here are some testimonies from a variety of sources demonstrating their understanding of the truth of Christ’s continuing proclamation to His Church in and through His servants:

In Scripture reading and sermon, in sacrament and in liturgical action, Christ proclaims God to man.¹²

The preacher is the servant of the Word. His sermon puts at Christ’s disposal the living language of the present day, with its associations with the everyday life of the congregation. It permits Christ to preach His Word through the mouth of the contemporary Church, as He has already through the Apostolic Church.¹³

When the Church is proclaiming the word of God, “Christ is still proclaiming his gospel.”¹⁴

We pray that this would be the preaching moment. For no one can preach unless You first speak; nobody can say anything unless You first give utterance; nobody can do anything unless You first send an anointing. We ask that You would be the preacher this morning, that you would get the glory.¹⁵

¹² William Nicholls, *Jacob’s Ladder: The Meaning of Worship* (London: Lutterworth Press, 1958), 38.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁴ J. D. Crichton, “A Theology of Worship,” in *The Study of Liturgy*, rev. ed., ed. Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, and Paul Bradshaw (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 28, quoting Second Vatican Council, Constitution on the Liturgy 7.33.

¹⁵ Dr. Frank A. Thomas, prayer before preaching.

We pray that you won't listen to us, but that you'll listen to Jesus through us.¹⁶

Jesus, Our Worship Leader

Even more remarkable perhaps are the implications of the second half of Hebrews 2:12, where Jesus tells the Father “in the midst of the congregation *I* will sing Your praise.” As our great High Priest, He represents us before the Father. He not only mediates our response of praise, He participates in it! This concept plumbs one of the most profound depths of the mystery of the Incarnation: that Jesus Christ, who as God deserves and receives worship (Heb 1:6), should also as man be a worshiper Himself!

Calvin, in his commentary on Hebrews, explains that in 2:12 we see that “Christ . . . is the chief Conductor of our hymns.”¹⁷ That He leads the congregation in their praise is not explicitly stated in the verse, but is clearly implied in harmony with the rest of Hebrews and the New Testament. As already examined, His continuing priesthood is a major theme in Hebrews, and one crucial activity of a priest is leading the people in worship. It stands to reason that our Priest is the One who must lead us in offering our sacrifice, which is now identified as a “sacrifice of praise” (Heb 13:15), and this latter verse explicitly states that we make that sacrifice “through Him.” It is a natural conclusion that our praises would be in conjunction with, motivated by, empowered by, and even led by Christ’s praises “in the midst of the assembly” (Heb 2:12b).

When Christ our model and brother praises the Father, He leads the way for us. Because we are in union with Him, His worship is our worship. Through Him we come into the Father’s presence in worship; we come clothed in His righteousness, and He bears up our weak offerings of worship and makes them one with His own perfect offering of praise. James Torrance has aptly summarized Jesus’ role: “The real agent in all true worship is Jesus Christ.”¹⁸ He is not an observer—He is the leader of our worship. As Thomas Torrance explains:

The Church on earth lives and acts only as it is directed by its heavenly Lord, and only in such a way that His Ministry is reflected in the midst of its ministry and worship. Therefore from first to last the worship and ministry of the Church on earth must be governed by the fact that Christ substitutes himself in our place, and that our humanity with its own acts of worship, is displaced by his, so that we appear before God not in our own name, not in our own significance, not in virtue of our own acts of confession, contrition, worship, and thanksgiving, but solely in the name of Christ and solely

¹⁶ *Highest Call* singing group, prayer before presenting program.

¹⁷ John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1949), on 2:12. The writer of Hebrews in 8:1 refers to Christ as a “*leitourgos* [liturgist] in the holy places.”

¹⁸ James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 17.

in virtue of what He has done in our name and on our behalf, and in our stead. Justification by Christ alone means that from first to last in the worship of God and in the ministry of the Gospel Christ himself is central, and that we draw near in worship and service only through letting Him take our place. He only is Priest. He only represents humanity. He only has an offering with which to appear before God and with which God is well-pleased. He only presents our prayers before God, and He only is our praise and thanksgiving and worship as we appear before the face of the Father. Nothing in our hands we bring—simply to His Cross we cling.¹⁹

Christ in Our Place

In its essence, New Testament worship centers in Jesus Christ and His two-way mediating ministry. Our worship is in, through, with, and by Jesus Christ.

Accordingly, the Church's worship will be best conformed to its true nature when its pattern echoes the Christological pattern we have seen in Scripture. In the first place, the Church must be attentive to the proclamation of the Word. . . . The second aspect of Christian worship is our joining in the *latreia* of Christ, offering through Him the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to the Father, in the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁰

Without the work of Christ, bringing God down to men, and gathering men in Himself before God, there can be no worship at all, and indeed no Church.²¹

Christ [is] the true though invisible Celebrant of all that is done.²²

Christ is the One in whom Word and response are united.²³

Some Implications and Correctives for Our Worship

The nature of true worship

James Torrance warned against what he termed the quasi-“Unitarian” worship that characterizes much evangelical practice:

We sit in the pew watching the minister “doing His thing,” exhorting us “to do our thing,” until we go home thinking we have done our duty for another week! This kind

¹⁹ Thomas F. Torrance, *Theology in Reconstruction*, 167.

²⁰ Nicholls, *Jacob's Ladder*, 27–28.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 36.

²² *Ibid.*, 39.

²³ *Ibid.*, 40.

of do-it-yourself-with-the-help-of-the-minister worship is what . . . the ancient church would have called Arian or Pelagian.²⁴

True worship, Torrance insists, is richly Trinitarian:

There is only one true Priest through whom and with whom we draw near to God our Father. There is only one Mediator between God and humanity. There is only one offering which is truly acceptable to God, and it is not ours. It is the offering by which He has sanctified for all time those who come to God by Him (Heb. 2:11; 10:10, 14). There is only one who can lead us into the presence of the Father by His sacrifice on the cross.²⁵

Worship is thus, according to Torrance, “the gift of participating through the Spirit in the incarnate Son’s communion with the Father.”²⁶ Or as John Witvliet has put it:

The Father *receives* our worship,
The Son *perfects* our worship,
The Holy Spirit *prompts* our worship.²⁷

The paradigm of true worship

Christ Himself is the fulfillment of the biblical pattern of revelation and response that underlies all true worship (Old and New Testament). We have seen that Christ Himself leads both parts in His two-way mediation as the Incarnate God-man. That gives both aspects a sublime and holy importance in the corporate gatherings of God’s people: not just the revelation of God’s truth (though that is primary), but also the response of the people, which Jesus Himself sees as so important that He is in their midst leading it.

The power of true worship

Whenever true worship happens, it is because Jesus Christ is in the midst of His people, leading them in their praises and presenting them to the Father as part of His own perfect offering of praise. No matter what form or style our worship may take, no matter what language, instruments, architecture, or art forms we may use—the power of true worship, in all its wonderfully varied manifestations, is the living Christ in our midst.

While we sometimes rather glibly speak of worshiping through Christ or praying in the name of Christ, we need to see that it is not worship or prayer made possible by Christ, but rather it is worship and prayer energized, transported, sanctified, and perfected by Christ as the basis for their acceptance by the Father. This is a much more active understanding of

²⁴ James Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 21.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 30.

²⁷ John D. Witvliet, unpublished lecture. See also his “The Trinitarian DNA of Christian Worship: Perennial Themes in Recent Theological Literature,” *Colloquium: Music, Worship, Arts* (New Haven: Yale Institute of Sacred Music, 2005). On the Holy Spirit’s role in worship, see [Worship Notes 1.9](#) (September 2006).

the dynamics of worship and prayer than we often acknowledge. Christ did not just open the way for us to the Father; He doesn't just show us the way to the Father; He takes us with Him into the Father's presence.

The access of true worship

An obvious (though, in our day, often sadly overlooked) corollary to the truth just above is pointed out by Bob Kauflin:

No worship leader, pastor, band, or song will ever bring us close to God. . . . Worship itself cannot lead us into God's presence. *Only Jesus himself* can bring us into God's presence.²⁸

Whatever the outward form of our worship may be, there is only *one* way to come to the Father in worship: through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

The excellence of true worship

God accepts and delights in our worship, not because it is so good, so well-rehearsed, so sincere (though all of these things are important), but because our Lord Jesus presents it to the Father in our place and on our behalf—and the Father is *always* pleased with His Son. It is the Son's excellence that gains the Father's favor.

This is God's grace for our worship. He does not intend for us to operate on a performance basis in our worship any more than in our salvation or sanctification. While we should of course offer our best to God in worship (through studying, practicing, and praying), ultimately that is not the ground of our acceptance before Him. We cannot impress Him with our music! C. S. Lewis warned about our tendency in this regard:

We must beware of the naïve idea that our music can 'please' God as it would please a cultivated human hearer. That is like thinking, under the old Law, that He really needed the blood of bulls and goats. . . . For all our offerings, whether of music or martyrdom, are like the intrinsically worthless present of a child, which a father values indeed, but values only for the intention.²⁹

God deserves and expects *perfect* worship. He has provided that for us in Jesus Christ, as He has in grace provided for our salvation and sanctification also.

We are accepted by God, not because we have offered worthy worship, but in spite of our unworthiness, because He has provided for us a Worship, a Way, a Sacrifice, a

²⁸ Bob Kauflin, *Worship Matters: Leading Others to Encounter the Greatness of God* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 74.

²⁹ C. S. Lewis, "On Church Music," in *Christian Reflections*, ed. Walter Hooper (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1994), 98–99.

Forerunner in Christ our Leader and Representative. This is the heart of all true Christian worship.³⁰

Who can love God with His heart, mind, and soul?
Who can achieve perfect union with God?
Who can worship God with a pure and unstained heart?
Not me! . . .
Not you. Not Billy Graham. . . .
Not anybody I know or you know.
Only Jesus can. He does for me and for you what neither of us can do for ourselves.

This is the message that is missing in the literature of contemporary [and most other] worship. It is too much about what I ought to do and too little about what God has done for me. God has done for me what I cannot do for myself. He did it in Jesus Christ. Therefore my worship is offered in a broken vessel that is in the process of being healed, but is not yet capable of fullness of joy, endless intense passion, absolute exaltation, and celebration. But Jesus, who shares in my humanity yet without sin, is not only my Savior—He is also my complete and eternal worship, doing for me, in my place, what I cannot do. . . . He is eternally interceding to the Father on our behalf. And for this reason, our worship is always in and through Christ. . . .

Thanks for Jesus Christ, who is my worship. We are free! And in gratitude, we offer our stumbling worship in the name of Jesus with thanksgiving.³¹

All of Grace

God receives great glory by providing for us what He demands from us. That's grace! The all-sufficiency of Christ envelops, enriches, fulfills, and perfects our worship.

God does not *throw us back upon ourselves* to make our response to His Word. But graciously He helps our infirmities by giving us Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit to make the appropriate response *for us* and *in us*.³²

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me. (Gal 2:20, NASB)

³⁰ James B. Torrance, "The Place of Jesus Christ in Worship," in *Theological Foundations for Ministry*, ed. Ray S. Anderson (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979), 352.

³¹ Robert E. Webber, "Contemporary Music-Driven Worship: A Blended Worship Response," in *Exploring the Worship Spectrum: Six Views*, ed. Paul Basden (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 130.

³² James B. Torrance, "The Place of Jesus Christ in Worship," 359. Emphasis added.

Jesus, Our True Worship Leader

Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. (Heb 13:15, NASB)