

Union with God, through Union with Christ

Notes on Christian Spirituality

- (1) Union with God has been given to us in Christ by grace (sola gratia) in the gift of participating through the Spirit in the Father-Son relationship held out to us in Him.
Sola gratia implies twin doctrines:-
(a) "all parts of our salvation are complete in Christ"(Calvin) the promises and law are fulfilled for us - sonship realised for us in Him.
(b) participation by the Spirit in Christ - in the Son's communion with the Father and the Son's mission from the Father to the world.
- (2) We are brought to union with God by union with Christ (participation, communion, fellowship, sharing).
The Christ who is in us, is the Christ who is for us (Gal 2,20) - Christus pro nobis is prior to Christus in nobis.
- (3) The Holy Spirit leads us to look away from self to what we are in Christ - personally and corporately.
- (4) "We share a common anointing with Christ"(Calvin). As Christ received the Spirit from the Father for us in His vicarious humanity, He now dispenses the Spirit to us out of His fulness, and unites us to himself by that same Spirit that we might receive the Spirit by faith and live a life in the Spirit. By the Spirit we are lifted up into the Triune life and the Gospel is "interiorised" in us, as Christ lives in us and exercises His continuing ministry of worship, mission and service in us and through us.
- (5) Faith is a "direct act" where we look away to Christ, "Christ for us" and "Christ in us". As such it is knowledge, cognitio (Calvin), receiving the call to "possess our possessions".
- (6) Assurance is of the essence of faith when we look away from self, knowing we are "accepted in the beloved", and do not look inward for "evidences", as our primary ground of assurance.
- (7) Repentance is therefore a response to grace (Christus pro nobis) not a condition of grace - "evangelical repentance", not "legal repentance". It means receiving forgiveness daily in repentance, "submitting to the verdict of guilty" before the Cross, in the name of Christ who has already "submitted to the verdict of guilty" for us.
- (8) Repentance (metanoia, conversion, sanctification, regeneration) has two parts, mortificatio and vivificatio (Romans ch. 6, Calvin).
Therefore mortification, (purgation, dying to self) is not a condition of union with God, but the gift of sharing in the sufferings of Christ, in union with the risen Christ, as He draws us into deeper union with God (Phil. 3.10ff)
- (9) Such faith and repentance have a retrospective and prospective aspect. We receive forgiveness for past sins which we daily confess, and joyfully face the future - life in the Kingdom - in ever deeper union with the Father and the Son and with one another (1 John ch. 1).
- (10) Through meditation on the Scriptures, we are called to both a life of contemplation and action.

Contemplation of:

- (a) Who Christ is - the Son of the Father, who draws us into union with the Father, and the Incarnate One in whom our true humanity is restored

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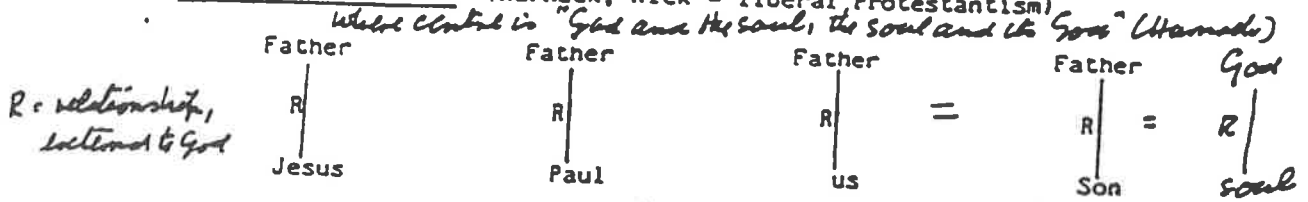
- (b) What Christ has done and is doing, in reconciling the world to God and human beings to one another - so that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, and all ethnic diversities transcended.
- (c) The Christ who calls us to "conform to Him", personally, in the church and in society, that He might exercise His reconciling ministry in us and through us, and make our unity in Him visible in His world.
- (11) Therefore, we are called to mortify actively all that hinders or obscures Christ's reconciling ministry, by dying to prejudice, racism, sectarianism, greed, sloth etc. and to passive mortification, i.e. to allow Christ to desegregate our hearts and minds, lift us up out of prejudice, sectarianism, etc. that He might exercise His ministry in us.
- (12) Mortification (askesis) is not "denying the creature", our natural affections, our bodies as such, in a world denying mysticism, but letting Christ sanctify them, to present us, body, mind and spirit, without spot or wrinkle to the Father (Eph 5.27), with our affections centred primarily in Him.
- (13) In authentic spirituality, there is no divorce between the "vertical" and the "horizontal" - between personal and social holiness, nor between the personal and the corporate.
- (a) "Vertically" we are called (personally and corporately) to union with God, by sharing through the Spirit in the Son's communion with the Father, and the Son's mission from the Father to the world.
- (b) "Horizontally", we have been given a Christological, not just an ethical, mandate
- to love others as God in Christ has loved us
to forgive others as God in Christ has forgiven us
to accept others as God in Christ has accepted us
to give others their humanity, as God in Christ has given us our humanity in Christ.
- (14) Union with God must be interpreted both Christologically and eschatologically. We are in via to become in ourselves what we are now in Christ, in the Kingdom of God. "Now are we the sons of God, but it does not yet appear what we shall be ..." (1 John 3.2). We commune with the Risen Christ who has given us a living hope (1 Peter 1.3). In "the time between the times" we are kept in suspense (Calvin). Christ (the Kingdom) is "in a manner present and in a manner absent" ... "till He come" (Calvin).
- (15) Prayer is the supreme expression of the Christian life - participating through the Spirit in the Son's Communion with the Father, in the intercession of our great High Priest, with the mind of Christ praying that God's will be done and His Kingdom come.
- "Even so come, Lord Jesus - maranatha!"

On a Trinitarian, incarnational understanding of the Christian life, there should be no division or separation between:-

- (1) Revelation and reconciliation
 - (2) Justification and sanctification (but not to be confused)
 - (3) Objective and subjective sanctification
 - (4) The vertical and the horizontal
 - (5) Evangelism and social justice (humanisation)
 - (6) The personal and the corporate
 - (7) Representation and Substitution
 - (8) Knowing and loving
- Knowing and acting,
Knowing and being*

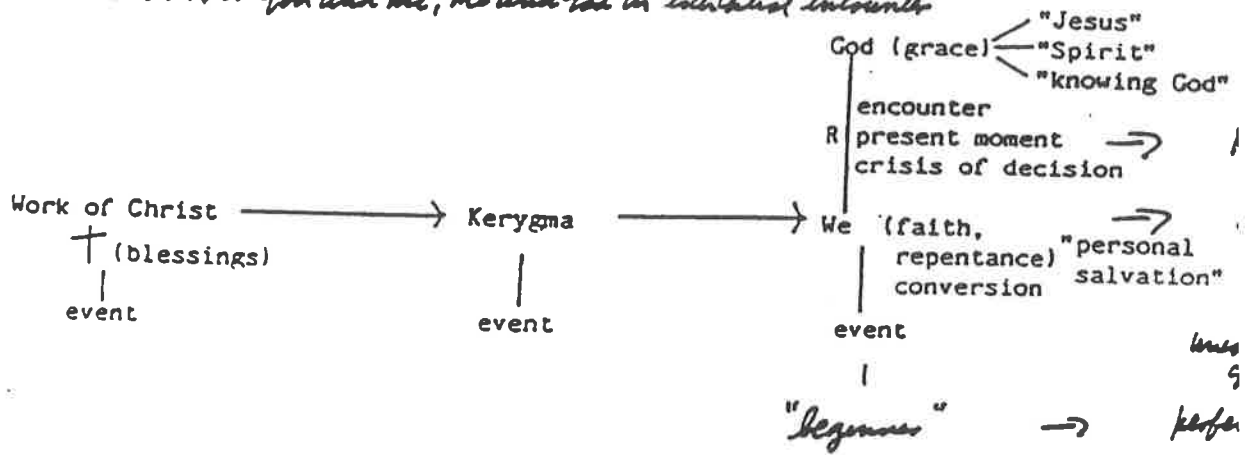
Three Theological Models of Union with God

1. The Unitarian Model (Harnack, Hick - liberal Protestantism)



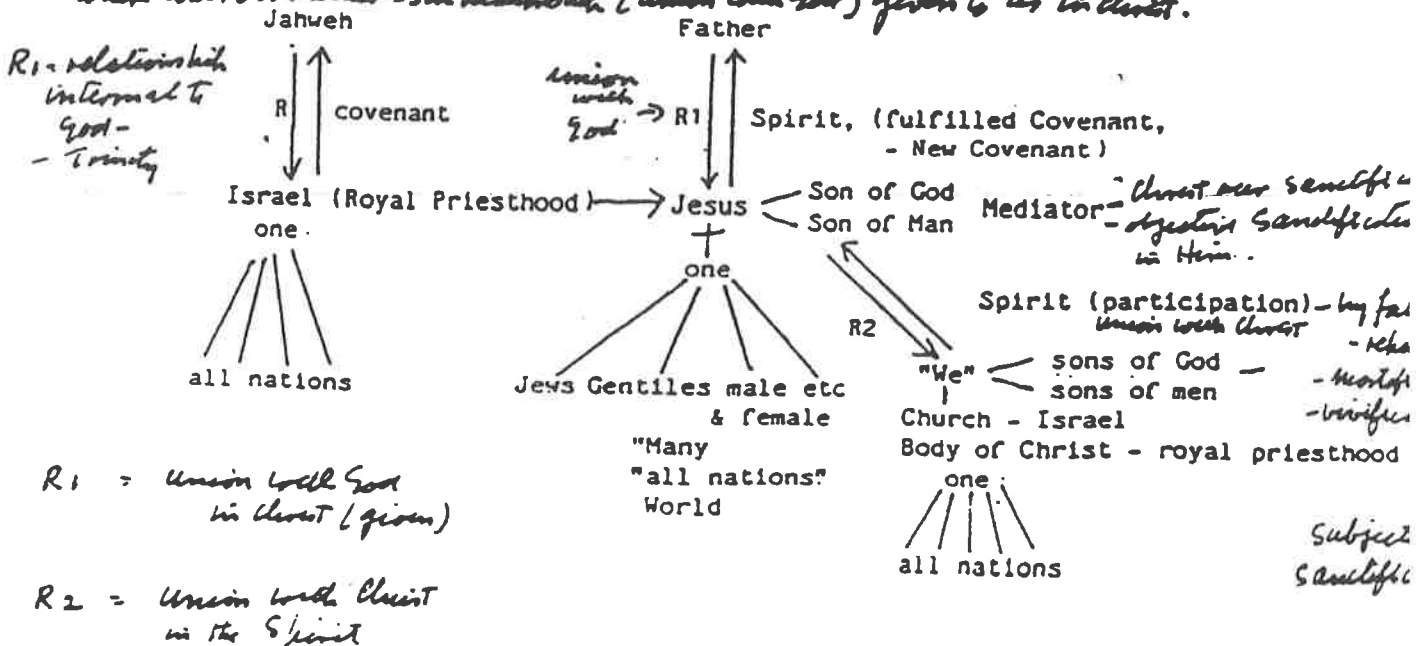
2. Existential, Experience Model (early Barth, Bultmann, evangelical experience)

Where center is God and me, me and God in locational encounter



3. Trinitarian, Incarnational Model (Nicaea, Calvin, McLeod Campbell, K. Barth)

Where center is Father-Son relationship (union with God) given to us in Christ.



The Arcana of Mount Carmel and The Dark Night of the Soul.

Stages on the Way to Union with God - the highest state of perfection

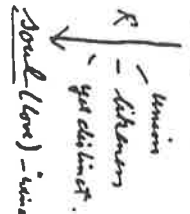
"On Mt. Carmel, God alone and".

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Union with God

- "Briccion of John of Capua"
- "supernatural union"
- "holiness"
- Perfection

God (Love) "sa"



God (Grace)

R ↓

Soul (Faith, relation, conversion)

Dark Night
- active purification
- purgation

Dark Night
- passive purification
- purgation

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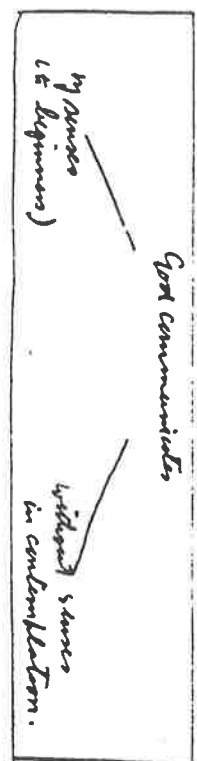
Soul (Love) - union



"Beginner"
- with "first experiences" of divine affection
- "mills" of affliction

"Proficient's"
- (low yet purgation)

Perfection
- "See will"



Meditation
- (ideas, images, of particulars)

Terminus a quo
- "beginner"

Medien
- "faid"

lead to proximity means to God

Terminus ad quem Union with God
- God's communication to soul

Union with God
- not mediated by object for perfection, but by God love.