



Oceanside URC—Adult Sunday School

What is *Reformed* Worship?

Handout #3

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The God We Worship

¹⁸For through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. ¹⁹So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, ²⁰built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, ²¹in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord. ²²In him you also are being built together into a dwelling place for God by the Spirit. (Eph. 2:18–22)

*See John Owen, “The Nature and Beauty of Gospel Worship” (*Works*, vol. 9)

We Worship the One God: Old Testament

Deut 4:35 cf. 4:39; Isa. 45:5, 18, 22

We Worship the Triune God: New Testament

Ephesians 2:18

“There is not the meanest believer but, with his most broken prayers and supplications, hath an immediate access unto God, and that as a Father; nor the most despised church of saints on the earth but it comes with its worship into the glorious presence of God himself.”—John Owen, *Works* 9:60

Ephesians 2:21–22

“In the spiritual worship of the gospel the whole blessed Trinity, and each person therein distinctly, do in that economy and dispensation wherein they act severally and peculiarly in the work of our redemption, afford distinct communion with themselves unto the souls of the worshippers.”—John Owen, *Works* 9:56–57

Church History’s Explanation

Early Writers: wrestling with confessing one God and the praise and practice of Christian worship:

Rom. 10:9

Rom. 1:7

2 Cor. 13:14

Matt. 28:19

Ancient Creeds: putting to words the praise and practice of the church:

Apostles' Creed: "I believe in God the Father...and in Jesus Christ...I believe in the Holy Spirit."

Nicene Creed: "I believe in the Holy Spirit...who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified."

Athanasian Creed: "And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity...the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped." (§3, 27)

Ancient Hymns:

"Phos Hilaron":

O gracious Light, pure brightness of the everliving Father in heaven, O Jesus Christ, holy and blessed!

Now as we come to the setting of the sun, and our eyes behold the vesper light, we sing your praises, O God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

You are worthy at all times to be praised by happy voices, O Son of God, O Giver of life, and to be glorified through all the worlds.¹

"My Hope is God"

My hope is God,
My refuge is the Lord,
My shelter is the Holy Ghost;
Be Thou, O Holy Three, adored!²

"Hymn to the Holy Trinity"

...and as we hymn the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit...³

¹ "Evening Prayer: Rite II," in *Book of Common Prayer* (1979).

² Samuel Willoughby Duffield, *The Latin Hymn-Writers and their Hymns* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1889), 10.

³ M. L. West, *Ancient Greek Music* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 325.

Gloria Patri:

Glory be to the Father,
And to the Son,
And to the Holy Ghost,
As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be,
World without end. Amen. Amen.

Why is this So Important?

Finally, when we ask the question, "What is worship?" we see clearly the importance of the dogma of the Holy Trinity. Christian worship is nothing less than (a) a real and vital communion with our God, the Father Almighty, the Creator of all things visible and invisible; (b) a real and vital participation in the life of Jesus Christ, Incarnate God, whose life is extended into and is encountered in the Church; and (c) a continuing and unending reception of the Holy Spirit, the Lifegiver, who prepares us to be authentic members of the household of God, the Body of Christ.

The Father comes to us in and by His Son and in and through His Holy Spirit. We come to the Father through the Son and in the Holy Spirit. Thus we are united to the Holy Trinity for eternal salvation.—Peter Toon, *Proclaiming the Gospel Through the Liturgy*, 113–114