

# The Heart of Contribution in Christianity

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## Introduction

The aim of this paper is to explore the primary source of *kōkenshin*, or the “heart of contribution,”<sup>i</sup> in the three major branches of Christianity, namely, Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. Readers who are familiar with the tremendous diversity not only among these three but also within each of them will naturally wonder if it is possible to draw any conclusions that the majority of adherents to these traditions would affirm as representative of their beliefs and practices. All of these Christian traditions, however, share common sources that perennially feed and give shape to the “desire to serve others,” or, as many Christians might say, the desire to love their neighbors. The common sources can be found in their core doctrines and liturgical practices centering around the incarnation of Christ, his suffering and death on the cross, and his resurrection from the dead.

## Approaching Christianity’s Heart of Contribution

Every Sunday, Christian worshipers gather to remember the life, death, and resurrection of their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and to reflect on the significance of these events for them and the world. They also observe special feasts and seasons, such as those of Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter, to focus more intensely on different aspects of Christ’s birth, suffering, death, and resurrection, among other things. Liturgical practices and emphases regarding their meaning vary widely across denominations and cultures.<sup>ii</sup> But all worshipping communities celebrate Christ’s birth as the point in time when God took on human flesh—that is, when he became “incarnate”—for their sake. And when they participate in Holy Communion or observe Lent and Good Friday, they remember the suffering and death of Christ as somehow benefiting them. Christ’s resurrection, too, is an event that they celebrate as the inauguration of a new creation and as the hope of victory over death.

From the Church Fathers to the present day, theologians and philosophers have debated the Church’s confession that Jesus Christ was both fully man and fully God. This paper is not the place to explain “orthodox”<sup>iii</sup> and “heterodox” Christological doctrines or to discuss the history of their development. That would require, among other things, an extensive discussion of the early controversies concerning the Trinity, the two natures of Christ, and other theological debates that culminated in the Chalcedonian Definition and other early creeds. Such a discussion would be essential, of course, for properly understanding the logic and significance that ecclesiastical leaders and theologians in the various traditions have ascribed to Christ’s birth, suffering and death, and resurrection down through the centuries to the present day.<sup>iv</sup> An esoteric theological survey is not required, however, in order to reflect on the general implications of these teachings for the vast majority of Christians, who accept them as “givens.”

Working on the assumption that nearly all adherents of Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christianity accept these teachings about Christ as givens, therefore, the aim here is to consider how Christians remember Christ’s birth, suffering, death, and resurrection as God’s “contribution,” and, consequently, how this remembrance, or *anamnesis*, motivates and shapes their contribution to others. The term “anamnesis” is from Jesus’ words to his disciples at “the Last Supper,” which is commemorated in the Eucharist:<sup>v</sup> “Do this in remembrance [*anamnēsin*] of me.”<sup>vi</sup> The

Church of England's *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* helpfully explains the significance of anamnesis in the context of Christian worship:

Through the structuring of our Christian memory, the past is able to come into our present, in a process of anamnesis (only weakly translated by our English 'remembrance') . . . This powerfully creative remembering has deep roots in Jewish tradition, and especially in the Passover meal. The shared preparation and consumption of this meal is a memorial action (*zikkaron*; cf Exodus 12.14 and 13.9), through which God's redemptive power in the past act of the Exodus can be freshly experienced in the present.<sup>vii</sup>

Our aim below will be to understand how anamnesis, or "powerfully creative remembering," of God's redemptive power in Christ fosters the urge to contribute in Christianity.

An alternative approach would be to concentrate on one or more of Jesus' so-called ethical teachings that command an active and sacrificial love of others, such as "the Golden Rule"<sup>viii</sup> or "the second great commandment."<sup>ix</sup> Indeed, this approach is common in many studies related to Christian ethics.<sup>x</sup> This would be a fruitful avenue of study, but, for the present purposes, it would present a severely truncated view of Christianity's motivators and shapers of "the contribution instinct" among Christians. The chief problem is that focusing on these commands alone would cause us to miss the primary impulse that, theoretically speaking, propels Jesus' followers to obey the call to love their neighbors. Then there is another problem with this approach. While it is true that the teachings *of* Christ inspire and guide Christians as they act on the urge to contribute to society, the teachings *about* Christ in any given tradition are perhaps more important for any study that would purport to explain altruistic behavior that is somehow distinctively Christian. This is because the teachings *about* Christ in each Christian tradition or denomination provide the interpretive framework for how people understand and act upon the teachings *of* Christ.

In all major branches of Christianity, love of God and neighbor is viewed as the natural response—following Taki, we might even call it an "instinctive" response<sup>xi</sup>—of individuals and communities who have themselves experienced God's love for them. Consider just a few well-known passages of Scripture that convey this idea (*italics mine*):

This is my commandment, that you love one another *as I have loved you*.<sup>xii</sup>

And walk in love, *as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us*, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.<sup>xiii</sup>

Husbands, love your wives, *as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her*.<sup>xiv</sup>

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. *Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus*, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found

in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.<sup>xv</sup>

We love *because he first loved us*.<sup>xvi</sup>

Creedal Christianity's primary evidence of this initial and initiating divine love is a story that is centered around the incarnation of God the Son, his suffering and death on a cross, and his resurrection and ascension into heaven. And it is the regular *anamnesis*, or active remembrance, of this divine love that is the central purpose of gathering regularly for Scripture readings and preaching, celebration of the Eucharist, celebration of holy days and feasts according to liturgical calendars, and many other Christian practices.

In order to understand the “heart of contribution” in Christianity—that is, what drives and shapes the impulse in Christianity to serve and contribute to others—it is necessary, then, to consider how Christians “remember” the story that reveals God's contribution, which becomes the primary source and model of their own contribution to others. In the space that follows, therefore, we will briefly examine the plot and usage of the metanarrative of God's contribution. Then, we will follow the narrative arc of the Christian liturgical year—concentrating particularly on the seasons of Advent and Christmas, Lent, and Easter—to understand how the experience of God's self-giving love in and through Christ awakens and defines the urge to contribute among Christians.

### **Cultivating the Heart of Contribution through Anamnesis**

In order to understand how anamnesis of the story of Christ's birth, suffering, death, and resurrection can motivate and shape the impulse to contribute to others, it is necessary to consider certain aspects and functions of Christian liturgical practice wherever worshippers gather—whether Orthodox, Catholic, or Protestant, and whether daily, weekly, or seasonal—to read Scriptures, recite creeds, join in prayers, listen to sermons, sing hymns and psalms, and celebrate the sacraments.<sup>xvii</sup> Though recognition of Christianity's tremendous diversity causes us to be cautious about over-generalizing, we can make the following important observations.

#### *The Metanarrative of God's Contribution*

The first point to recognize is the “storied” nature of Christian faith, and how this story depicts God's acts in human history as a divine contribution to humanity. From earliest times, the “rule of faith” (*regula fidei*),<sup>xviii</sup> most famously expressed in the Apostles' Creed and the Nicene Creed, explicitly articulated and affirmed a particular story, or metanarrative, with and within which professing Christians could identify themselves.<sup>xix</sup> This self-identification occurs, in large part, because the sacraments and the liturgy are grounded in, and centered around, this particular story. It is the story of creation, fall, incarnation, redemption, and consummation that emerges in the Christian reading of the Old and New Testaments together. And it is a story in which “contribution”—in this case, a divine contribution, or self-giving<sup>xx</sup>—is at the heart. The over-arching plot of the Christian metanarrative can be summed up as follows.

God the Father, having created a good world, made men and women in his image and appointed them to be caretakers of this world and of one another. But mankind's relationships with God, one another, and the world were ruptured when they disobeyed and rebelled against God.<sup>xxi</sup>

In the “fullness of time,” God the Son entered into this fallen world and

became subject to his own law by assuming human nature. It is the resolute claim of the Scriptures, creeds, and liturgies that God “sent,” or “gave,” his only begotten Son for humanity’s sake. In the traditional and orthodox view, the incarnation cannot be understood as the chance birth of a great person who taught profound truths and accomplished marvelous deeds. Rather, Christian teaching about the incarnation emphasizes that God intentionally and wholly embraced humanity through the birth of Jesus Christ.

Despite his perfect obedience to the law, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered as a criminal and died a cursed death on the cross. And through this death, Jesus fulfilled God’s righteousness and bore the penalty in the place of mankind, who was condemned to death and separation from God. The suffering and death of Jesus Christ, therefore, is not construed as an unexpected and unfortunate event. Rather, it is evidence that God intentionally and sacrificially participates in humanity’s pain and suffering. But the story does not end in despair.

God defeated death itself when Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to the Father, where he reigns and awaits the fulfillment of time. All this God did through the power of his Holy Spirit, whom he has sent to empower his body on earth, namely, the Church, to mediate God’s love and grace to the world. In traditional Christianity, Jesus’ resurrection cannot be explained in a way that diminishes either its physical or spiritual reality. Rather, the resurrection shows that God intentionally and powerfully enables the needy and desperate to gain victory over suffering and death.

#### *Becoming Recipients and Agents of Divine Contribution*

Having recognized the arc and scope of this “meta story,” let us now consider the function or use of this story in worship—whether as a whole or in parts—and how it gives rise to the urge to contribute to others. Beginning with the incarnation, it is important to recognize how intensely personal this story typically becomes for worshipers. They do not recite creeds, listen to sermons, sing hymns, or say prayers about Christ’s birth, suffering, death, and resurrection as mere history lessons, even if they accept them as historical events that happened approximately two thousand years ago. Nor is the chief purpose of the weekly and seasonal liturgies to prove to “unbelievers” the surprising claims that Jesus is none other than God incarnate and that, consequently, Jesus’ death and resurrection carry universal significance. Again, these truths are generally assumed in traditional Christian gatherings.

One of the chief purposes of Christian worship, rather, is to invite the assembled to remember through liturgical anamnesis how and for what purpose they themselves have become actors in this gospel story, both as recipients and, consequently, as agents of God’s grace and love. Baptism, Holy Communion, Scripture readings, hymn-singing, sermons, prayers, and other liturgical practices facilitate this “remembrance,” in large part, by drawing congregants into the gospel metanarrative, especially as it touches upon Jesus’ incarnation, suffering and death, and resurrection. Beginning with the incarnation, therefore, let us examine more closely how “remembering” the heart of the Christian metanarrative confirms for Christian worshipers their union with Christ and motivates them to love others as God has loved them (or, in Taki’s terms, to contribute to others as God has contributed to them).

#### *The Incarnation of Christ: The Contribution of Embracing Others*

At Christmas, Christian worshipers remember the “good news of great joy” that “unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the

Lord.”<sup>xxii</sup> As they identify themselves with the “I’s” and “We’s”—whether explicit or implied—of psalms, hymns, and prayers, and also with various biblical characters, worshipers “remember” the personal significance and relevance of Christ’s birth. So, for instance, when they read the Christmas story in the Gospel of Luke, they associate themselves with the humble shepherds who were longing for a savior. Because they read Scripture as God’s word that transcends its historical settings, they remember this “good news” as something directed especially to them. “Unto you is born this day” applies to the congregation here and now as much as it did to the shepherds tending their flocks some two thousand years ago.

Christmas hymns, or carols, are good examples of how liturgical anamnesis actualizes the incarnation for believers. For the most part, these hymns are composed in the present tense and thus become contemporary prayers, proclamations, and calls to worship by and for the singing congregation. Consider, for instance, the singers’ identification with the shepherds and the Magi in two English stanzas of “Adeste Fideles”:

See how the shepherds, summoned to His cradle,  
Leaving their flocks, draw nigh to gaze;  
We too will thither bend our joyful footsteps;

Lo! star led chieftains, Magi, Christ adoring,  
Offer Him incense, gold, and myrrh;  
We to the Christ Child bring our hearts’ oblations.

One of the final stanzas and the call to worship in the refrain of the same hymn show even more clearly how worshipers and carolers treat the incarnation as if it is being actualized “here and now” for them personally:

Yea, Lord, we greet Thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to Thee be glory given;  
Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing.

O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
O come, let us adore Him,  
Christ the Lord.

Or consider the last stanza of “Little Town of Bethlehem”:

Oh holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray  
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today  
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell  
O come to us, abide with us, our lord Emanuel.

In the incarnation, according to Christian Scripture and tradition, God embarked on a divine mission to rescue humanity from sin and death. Scriptural and liturgical language depict the incarnation as the outcome of an active love that compels God to “enter in” and to be “born in” their world, “abiding” with and embracing people in whatever condition he finds them. The Christian traditions are in agreement that God’s initial act of love revealed in the incarnation is unmerited, that

is, it is not God's response to some previous human contribution. In fact, some scriptural passages depict humans as hostile to God in their natural state.<sup>xxiii</sup> And yet, according to Scripture and Church teaching, God did not remain at a distance, apathetic and aloof. Instead, he sent his Son because of his unconditional love and compassion for humanity<sup>xxiv</sup> to live a life and to die a death that would bring them peace.<sup>xxv</sup> How, though, does this relate to the human urge to contribute?

At one level, Christians view the incarnation, that is, the virgin birth of Jesus Christ in Bethlehem, as an unrepeatable historical event. At another level, however, the Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Churches all view the incarnation as an ongoing reality. Christ has given his Holy Spirit to "abide" with and in the Church in every nation and culture on earth. And at their baptism, individuals are "baptized into Christ" and thus united with his body on earth, the Church.<sup>xxvi</sup> The ongoing significance of the incarnation for Christians, then, is both personally and others oriented: Christ came to us, embraced us as we were, and loved us. His Spirit now lives in us, and it compels us, Christ's "flesh" on earth, to enter into the lives of others, to embrace them with all their needs, and to love them as Christ loved us.<sup>xxvii</sup>

### *The Passion and Death of Christ: The Contribution of Suffering and Dying for Others*

Christians "remember" Jesus Christ's suffering and death on the cross as the ultimate expression of the divine self-giving (*kenshin*)—a good-news story that God "contributed" everything—both for "my" sake and for the sake of others. Properly understanding this point will give great insight into the primary source of the urge to contribute in Christianity.

At every Eucharist, and throughout the season of Lent, worshipers reflect intensely on the great sacrifice that Jesus made for them. During the Communion meal—a ritual at the very heart of Christian worship that commemorates Jesus' Last Supper with his disciples "on the night when he was betrayed" and handed over to be put to death on a Roman cross the following day—worshipers eat the bread and drink the wine in "remembrance" of Jesus' broken body, "which is given for you," and shed blood, which represents "the new covenant in my blood" and "is poured out for you."<sup>xxviii</sup> They also remember and meditate on various other aspects of Jesus' suffering and death through Scripture readings, responsive readings, prayers, hymns, and other liturgical practices.

Worshipers receive this "news" of Christ's suffering and death as *good news* for them personally because they understand themselves as somehow having been saved by this sacrifice. It would not be profitable, given our present purposes, to grapple with sectarian theologies of the atonement or the Eucharist, or with other theological formulations concerning the meaning of Christ's suffering and death. It is sufficient here to recognize that the liturgy in all of the orthodox traditions leads worshipers to accept Jesus Christ's sacrifice as an intentional act of God that brings forgiveness of sins; freedom from bondage to sin, the world, and evil spirits; healing of emotional and spiritual wounds or sickness; reconciliation with God the Father; freedom from divine punishment; the hope of eternal life; and so on.

Let us briefly consider a representative example of the many liturgical texts that help worshipers to "remember" Jesus' suffering and death on the cross. "O Sacred Head Now Wounded"—or "O Sacred Head, Surrounded" in Roman Catholic hymnals—is a classical hymn that is frequently sung during Lent, especially on Good Friday.<sup>xxix</sup> It is also a popular Communion hymn, and therefore it may be sung at any time of the year. It will be instructive to observe how this hymn, like much of the liturgy, becomes an exercise of personal and corporate anamnesis of God's loving and

costly contribution for *me* “yesterday and today and forever.”<sup>xxx</sup> Here are but two of its many stanzas:

O sacred Head! now wounded,  
    With grief and shame weighed down,  
Now scornfully surrounded  
    With thorns, Thy only crown;  
O sacred Head! what glory,  
    What bliss, till now was Thine!  
Yet, though despised and gory,  
    I joy to call Thee mine.

What Thou, my Lord, hast suffered,  
    Was all for sinners' gain:  
Mine, mine, was the transgression,  
    But Thine the deadly pain.  
Lo! here I fall, my Savior:  
    'Tis I deserve Thy place;  
Look on me with Thy favor,  
    Vouchsafe to me Thy grace.<sup>xxxi</sup>

This hymn, which is composed as a prayer to Jesus, is a good example of the Lenten and Eucharistic liturgies for several reasons.

The first stanza is typical of the “storied” and graphic nature of much Christian liturgy. Worshipers do not attend primarily to abstract truths. The above hymn, for instance, directs worshipers to reflect upon the “grief” and “shame” that Jesus suffered on the cross, and it reminds worshipers that Jesus gave up his former “glory” and “bliss” for this. The fact that it was God’s sacrifice did not make it easy or pain-free. To the contrary, because God fully assumed human nature in the incarnation, Christ’s suffering and death was a “pain” of cosmic proportions. And despite theological debate primarily in the West about questions of divine passibility and impassibility, the major traditions are in concert with Scripture’s characterization of Christ’s suffering and death as a divine contribution that was made without regard for personal cost and benefit. The divine love transcends human comprehension, yet God’s “contribution” is presented in a form and manner that can be grasped by young and old from all walks of life.

The second stanza nicely reflects both the personal and corporate dimensions of anamnesis centered upon the divine *kenshin*, or self-giving. Here, worshipers “remember” that Jesus suffered “the deadly pain” for *my* sin—“Mine, mine, was the transgression . . . ’Tis I deserve Thy place.” The chief emphasis throughout, as in many scriptural and liturgical texts for recitation, singing, praying, and other purposes, is upon the loving sacrifice that God made for *me*. At the same time, the hymn reflects awareness that Christ’s suffering and death was for everyone—“all for sinners’ gain.” Indeed, even if sung or spoken in the first person, anamnesis in solidarity with others in the context of public worship nurtures in Christian believers empathy for a wide range of human needs,<sup>xxxii</sup> and it instills in them the recognition that God himself sees and cares for all of these needs.

Finally, both stanzas, together with the rest of the hymn, effectively illustrate the multitemporal focus of anamnesis. Except in one phrase using the past tense in the second stanza above, worshipers “remember” Christ’s suffering and death as if it were

occurring here and now—notice the present tense throughout, and the three occurrences of “now” in the first stanza alone—and they meditate on its future benefits for them and others (in the case of this hymn, the hope of freedom after this worldly life is over).<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Although Christ’s suffering and death on the cross was a one-time event, much like the incarnation, Christians also view his suffering—and now their participation in it<sup>xxxiv</sup>—as an ongoing reality through which God continues to “contribute” to people in need. In the celebration of Holy Communion and other liturgical “remembrances” of Jesus’ suffering and death, worshipers are confronted with the “gospel” news that God loves them to such a great extent that he came to earth and lived an obedient and righteous life, and that eventually he suffered and gave up his own life so that they might live.

When subjectivized, this good-news story of God’s sacrifice for “me” results in the powerful impulse to sacrifice oneself and to contribute to others.<sup>xxxv</sup> Numerous passages in the New Testament reflect the assumption that Christ’s sacrificial “contribution” is an example for Christians to follow. One of the more famous texts that call on Christians to follow Christ’s example is a scriptural passage that is read at many Christian weddings. In a letter to Christians in the city of Ephesus, the Apostle Paul writes: “Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”<sup>xxxvi</sup> Then, a few sentences later, he addresses the men directly with these well-known instructions:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

Paul assumes that remembering Christ’s sacrificial love for the church will motivate husbands to love their wives—and, by implication, all members of Christ’s church to love their neighbors—“as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### *The Resurrection of Christ: The Contribution of Sharing New Life with Others*

The resurrection of Jesus, according to Scripture and Christian tradition, fulfilled one of the central purposes of Christ’s advent, passion, and death, namely, God’s gift of eternal life. “Eternal life” does not mean simply life that lasts forever. More importantly, it refers to a quality of life that reflects the divine life and that is infused with divine love. It is a “new” and “fruitful” life characterized by hope, righteousness, freedom from death’s dominion, and unity with the living Christ and one another.<sup>xxxix</sup> Within the Christian worldview, it is the life which humans were originally created to enjoy.

In traditional Christianity, therefore, sacrificial living and even dying for others is more than an imitation of Christ. As already noted above, Scripture and the Church teach that people are spiritually united with Christ in their baptism. And baptism “into Christ” signifies not only death and burial with Christ, but also resurrection from the dead to a new life.<sup>xl</sup> Christians, therefore, accept Scripture’s



indications that the impulse to contribute sacrificially is amplified and made effective because the Spirit of the resurrected Christ now lives in his followers, who constitute the Church, his body on earth. The Apostle Paul's view of his own union with Christ in Christ's death and life is normative in orthodox Christianity:

I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.<sup>xli</sup>

This important passage draws together the themes of Christ's love, Christ's self-sacrifice, and Christ's real presence "now" living, loving, and giving through the believer who has been united with Christ.<sup>xlii</sup>

## Conclusion

In *Homo Contribuens*, Hisao Taki offers a helpful discussion of the Japanese expression *okagesama de*, which is translated as "I am indebted to you (for it)."<sup>xliii</sup> He argues that the common phrase expresses "an implicit understanding that a person 'living' in society is *being enabled to live* by others."<sup>xliiv</sup> In Taki's view, therefore, *okagesama de* "vividly illustrates the nature of *Homo contribuens*" because it "reflects a general sense of gratitude towards even total strangers for this 'being enabled to live.'" He concludes his brief discussion of this "verbal courtesy" with this assertion:

Such expressions are thought to be integrally linked with traditional pantheistic beliefs and rituals that required people to show gratitude towards the innumerable deities that abide in all things and by whose grace all things come to be.<sup>xliv</sup>

As we have seen above, one of the chief aims of Christian worship is to cultivate in worshipers a strong sense of *okagesama de* towards the Triune God, that is, to God the Father, who gives his Son; to God the Son, who gives his Spirit; and to God the Spirit, who gives new life. Theoretically, then, this experience of being deeply loved and "being enabled to live" by God motivates a "life mode" that is patterned after and energized by the divine life.<sup>xlvi</sup>

The incarnation, the suffering and death of Christ, and the resurrection together constitute the preeminent evidence for Orthodox, Catholic, and Protestant Christians alike that God loves and embraces his children, and that his love makes a difference in their lives. Whereas the liturgy of the incarnation draws people into the past, present, and future story of God's embracement of their humble state through the sending and advent of his Son, the liturgy surrounding the passion and death of the Son draws them into the past, present, and future story of God's great and personal sacrifice for "me." This anamnesis of God's salvation in solidarity with others, then, nurtures in Christian worshipers empathy for their neighbors' needs as well as their own. It also serves to instill in them the recognition that God fully embraces people together with all of their needs, and that God sacrifices everything to give them peace and eternal life. Consequently, as worshiping communities "remember" the story of their own salvation and unity with Christ, they begin to understand and view themselves as the means and agents through whom God has chosen to "contribute" new life to others by showing others the same "incarnational" and sacrificial love that they themselves have experienced in Christ.

<sup>i</sup> “The urge to contribute” (a translation that I also use below) is perhaps the most common rendering of the phrase *kōken suru kimochi* (貢献する気持ち), or *kōkenshin* (貢献心), in Hisao Taki’s *Homo Contribuens: The Need to Give and the Search for Fulfilment* (Kent, U.K.: Renaissance Books, 2008), which is a translation of his *Koken suru Kimochi* (Tokyo: Kinokuniya Company Ltd., 2001). In *Homo Contribuens*, Taki characterizes humanity as “man the contributor,” that is, “as an inclusive fellowship of mutual service” (45). He argues that man is endowed by nature with a psychological instinct (41) that can be recognized as *kōkenshin*, “the urge to contribute.” In Taki’s view, the urge to contribute is “an instinctual urge,” or a natural “desire to serve others” (49). We also have self-centered instincts and hedonistic urges, and these create inner conflict with our natural desire to contribute to the lives of others (41). However, Taki argues, if we analyze our “self” and come to understand it in relation to others, and if we develop “a sensitivity to phenomena that arise from unseen causes and an inquiring mind that seeks the essential nature inherent in those phenomena,” we can realize “the invisible urge to contribute” within ourselves (49).

<sup>ii</sup> There are many helpful resources on Christian worship’s denominational and cultural diversity down through history and around the world today. See, for instance, Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen B. Westerfield Tucker, eds., *The Oxford History of Christian Worship* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Charles E. Farhadian, ed., *Christian Worship Worldwide: Expanding Horizons, Deepening Practices* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007); Gail Ramshaw, *Christian Worship: 100,000 Sundays of Symbols and Rituals* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 2009).

<sup>iii</sup> When not capitalized, “orthodox” refers to that which has been deemed “correct” or has been approved by ecclesiastical councils, especially in the early centuries of the Common Era. When capitalized, on the other hand, “Orthodox” refers to the branch of Christianity frequently called the “Eastern Orthodox Church.”

<sup>iv</sup> See Gerald O’Collins SJ, *Christology: A Biblical, Historical, and Systematic Study of Jesus* (2nd Edition; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), a widely used text that approaches Christology from various angles. For an accessible collection of studies treating contemporary issues as well as classical concerns, see Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen, *Christology: A Global Introduction* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003).

<sup>v</sup> The Eucharist is also called “Holy Communion,” “the Lord’s Supper,” etc., depending on the tradition. The terms will be used interchangeably in this paper.

<sup>vi</sup> See Luke 22:19 and 1 Corinthians 11:24. Note that *anamnēsin* is the accusative form of *anamnēsis*.

<sup>vii</sup> *Common Worship: Times and Seasons* (London: Church House Publishing, 2006), 1. For a scholarly treatment of the ethical demands of Christian “remembrance” of salvation, see Bruce T. Morrill, *Anamnesis as Dangerous Memory* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press, 2000), especially chapter 4, “Christian Memory: Anamnesis of Christ Jesus.” Also of interest is Wolfhart Pannenberg’s argument that anamnesis mediates Christ’s presence in the Eucharist in his *Systematic Theology*, Vol. 3 (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 305-24.

<sup>viii</sup> “So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 7:12). All Scripture quotations are taken from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Bibles, 2001).

<sup>ix</sup> “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:39).

<sup>x</sup> There are too many works in the field of Christian ethics to list here. For helpful overviews, topical studies, bibliographies, etc., consult Robin Gill, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Gilbert Meilaender and William Werpehowski, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Theological Ethics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

<sup>xi</sup> Taki, *Homo Contribuens*, 41-43.

<sup>xii</sup> John 15:12. The speaker is Jesus.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ephesians 5:2.

<sup>xiv</sup> Ephesians 5:25.

<sup>xv</sup> Philippians 2:1-8. This passage in the Apostle Paul’s letter to a group of Christians in Philippi is particularly interesting because it contains what appears to be an early Christological hymn (verses 6-11) that Paul quotes to motivate his readers to serve “the interests of others” by drawing their attention to the incarnation and death of Christ. For studies on this important text, including treatments of its ethical significance, see Ralph P. Martin, *A Hymn of Christ: Philippians 2:5-11 in Recent Interpretation & in the Setting of Early Christian Worship* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997); Ralph P. Martin and Brian J. Dodd, eds., *Where Christology Began: Essays on Philippians 2* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster Knox, 1998).

<sup>xvi</sup> 1 John 4:19. In this passage, “he” refers to God.

<sup>xvii</sup> For an academic and ecumenical work on a wide range of topics related to liturgical theology and

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practice, see Cheslyn Jones, Geoffrey Wainwright, Edward Yarnold, and Paul Bradshaw, eds., *The Study of Liturgy* (Revised Edition; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

<sup>xviii</sup> In the sixteenth century, the Protestant Reformers applied the term “rule of faith” to Scripture itself. In literature before then, however, and in Catholic and Orthodox circles still today, the term most often refers to the Apostles’ Creed. For a brief historical survey of the Rule of Faith, see Geoffrey W. Bromiley, “Rule of Faith,” in *The Encyclopedia of Christianity*, Vol. 4 (ed. Erwin Fahlbusch and Geoffrey W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2005), 758-59.

<sup>xix</sup> For an especially helpful treatment of this topic, see Paul M. Blowers, “The *Regula Fidei* and the Narrative Character of Early Christian Faith,” in *Pro Ecclesia* VI, no. 2 (1997): 199-228.

<sup>xx</sup> I have in mind, here, the Japanese term *kenshin* (献身), which, in nominal form, may be translated as “self-giving,” “devotion of oneself,” or “dedication of oneself.”

<sup>xxi</sup> The “testimonies” of Scripture and liturgical tradition lead worshipers to remember their former selves apart from God through a variety of metaphors. For instance, they may “remember” themselves as: rebels against God and his law; slaves to sin, the world, and/or evil spirits; alienated from their heavenly Father; lost sheep; having incurred an unpayable debt; bearing a heavy burden; filthy and impure; sick and diseased; wandering in darkness; guilty and facing the death penalty for their sins; already dead in their sins; and so on. Correspondingly, they “remember” Christ variously as the Savior who came: to make peace between them and God; to free them from bondage to sin, the world, and/or evil spirits; to restore them to God the Father; to seek and to find them; to pay their debt; to lighten their burden; to cleanse and purify them; to bring them healing; to lead them out of darkness; to take their punishment upon himself and pay its penalty for them; to revive their souls to life; and so on.

<sup>xxii</sup> This frequently recited pronouncement is found in Luke 2:10-11, where the angel announces Christ’s birth to lowly shepherds watching their flocks nearby.

<sup>xxiii</sup> See, for example, Romans 5:10, Colossians 2:21, and surrounding passages.

<sup>xxiv</sup> The third stanza of the Christmas hymn “Little Town of Bethlehem” nicely illustrates several of the points raised above:

How silently, how silently, the wondrous gift is given  
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heaven  
No ear may hear his coming, but in this world of sin  
Where meek souls will receive him still, the dear Christ enters in.

<sup>xxv</sup> As this statement indicates—and as the liturgy reflects—one cannot understand the full significance of the incarnation for Christians without relating it to Christ’s suffering, death, resurrection, ascension, and anticipated second coming, and vice versa. For example, for a recent treatment of the critical connection between the incarnation and resurrection in a traditional understanding, see Paul D. Molnar, *Incarnation and Resurrection: Toward a Contemporary Understanding* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007).

<sup>xxvi</sup> See depictions of baptism as the means by which people are united with Christ and one another, for instance, in Romans 6:1-11, 1 Corinthians 12:13, and Galatians 3:26-29.

<sup>xxvii</sup> So, for example, the Church can now interpret Jesus’ commission in the Gospel of Luke as its own: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:18-19).

<sup>xxviii</sup> The quoted phrases are from Luke 22:17-20 and 1 Corinthians 11:23-27, two scriptural passages typically quoted in Communion services.

<sup>xxix</sup> This hymn originates from the Latin poem, “Salve caput cruentatum,” which is traditionally attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux, a twelfth-century Cistercian monk, but was more likely composed by the fifteenth-century mystic A. von Loewen. The poem was translated into German by the Lutheran Paul Gerhardt, and then from German into English by James W. Alexander, an American minister and theologian (see Erik Routley, *An English-Speaking Hymnal Guide* [edited and expanded by Peter W. Cutts; Chicago: GIA Publications, 2005], 135). As the two titles indicate, the hymn is generally sung in different versions in Roman Catholic and Protestant circles. For example, it appears in two versions in Catholic and Protestant sections of the *Armed Forces Hymnal*, published around the middle of the twentieth century. See Felicia Piscitelli, “Protestant Hymnody in Contemporary Roman Catholic Worship,” in *Wonderful Words of Life: Hymns in American Protestant History and Theology* (ed. Richard J. Mouw and Mark A. Noll; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2004), 151.

<sup>xxx</sup> From Hebrews 13:8, a well-known New Testament passage: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” I will return, below, to comment again on the multitemporal nature of Christian worship.

<sup>xxxi</sup> This translation is from the version in Philip Schaff, *Ichthus Christ in Song: Hymns of Immanuel*

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(New York: Anson D. F. Randolph & Company, 1870), 178-81; see 182-83 for another version. Schaff remarks that this “classical hymn has shown an imperishable vitality in passing from Latin into German, and from the German into the English, and proclaiming in three tongues, and in the name of three confessions, – the Catholic, the Lutheran, and the Reformed, – with equal effect, the dying love of our Saviour, and our boundless indebtedness to him” (178). Besides the Catholic, the Lutheran, and the Reformed, this hymn has been adopted by many more denominations, as well.

<sup>xxxii</sup> It is generally the case that individuals and even entire communities find special significance in certain aspects or “results” of Christ’s sacrifice because of their life experiences. Consider, for instance, the number of Negro spirituals that characterize salvation as deliverance from bondage and oppression. But through participating in public worship, worshipers pray new prayers, sing new songs, and hear new stories that cause them to “remember” many other ways in which those around them experience salvation, and they begin to reinterpret their own experience through new lenses.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> For further insight into how Christians approach this hymn in particular, and the cross in general, see the extended meditation in Jeffrey P. Greenman and George R. Sumner, *Unwearied Praises: Exploring Christian Faith Through Classic Hymns* (Toronto: Clements Publishing, 2004), 73-82.

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Through their baptism and participation in the Communion meal, and through the exercise of faith, Christians view themselves as united with Christ in his death so that they might be “raised with him through faith” (Colossians 2:12) to a new and eternal life. For an attempt to identify common perspectives among Christians regarding baptism and Holy Communion, see *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Faith & Order Paper No. 111; Geneva: WCC Publications, 1982), an important document jointly composed by Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox representatives at a World Council of Churches conference in Lima, Peru.

<sup>xxxv</sup> “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” another very popular hymn, effectively expresses the emotive impact and ethical implications of God’s contribution: “Were the whole realm of nature mine, That were a present far too small; Love so amazing, so divine, Demands my soul, my life, my all.” See a translation and brief commentary on the hymn in J. R. Watson, *An Annotated Anthology of Hymns* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 134-36.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> Ephesians 5:1-2.

<sup>xxxvii</sup> Ephesians 5:25-30.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Elsewhere, the Apostle Peter exhorts servants to respect their masters and continue to “do good” even when they are not rewarded justly: “. . . But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps” (1 Peter 2:20-21).

<sup>xxxix</sup> For these and other characterizations of the new life because of Christ’s resurrection, see, for instance, Romans 4:25; 6:4, 9; 7:4; 1 Corinthians 15; 1 Peter 1:3. Overviews of life, death, and the afterlife in the ancient Near East, the Greco-Roman world, Second Temple Judaism, and the various collections in the New Testament can be found in Richard N. Longenecker, ed., *Life in the Face of Death: The Resurrection Message of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998).

<sup>xl</sup> See notes 26 and 34, above, concerning scriptural depictions of baptism as a means of union with Christ and his body, the Church. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul, in particular, speaks of baptism in “storied” terms, that is, he explains its significance in light of the Christian metanarrative. See especially Romans 6:1-11 and Colossians 2:9-15. It is important to note, however, that baptism has other symbolic significance, such as the “washing” away of sins and receiving the Holy Spirit (see, e.g., Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 12:13).

<sup>xli</sup> Galatians 2:20.

<sup>xlii</sup> Other relevant scriptural passages include Romans 8:9-11; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 12:4-31; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12. Scriptural passages such as these, together with various liturgical texts, inform the common view among Christians that Christ’s Spirit lives and acts through them, indicating to them that the impulse to “love as Christ loved” stems not only from the instinctive desire to imitate Christ because they have experienced his love and salvation, but that it is also a gift or “fruit” of the Holy Spirit, who is living and active within them.

<sup>xliii</sup> Taki, *Homo Contribuens*, 50-51.

<sup>xliv</sup> *Ibid.*, 51; his italics.

<sup>xlv</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>xlvi</sup> On “life modes,” see especially *ibid.*, 43-50.