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The Word of God in Worship

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Introduction

If we would seek to understand the Word of God in worship, it is necessary for us first to say something about Jesus Christ in worship. Our understanding of Jesus Christ, who He is, what He came to do and what He does do for us today, in worship, will guide and control our understanding of worship and of the importance and activity of the Word of God in worship.

The Importance of Worship

Israel was called to be a worshipping community, a "royal priesthood". The worship of God is man's highest, noblest activity. It gives meaning, direction and joy to the whole of life. All God's purposes in Creation and Redemption are fulfilled in us when, together in our worship, we are renewed in and through Christ and in the name of Christ we glorify God. Through God's Grace we are called to voice for all people, for all creatures and for all creation, the praises of God and to realise our God-given destiny to be priests of Creation under Christ, our Great High Priest, (Cf. *Reports to the General Assembly*, 1970, page 201). God calls man to worship, to glorify and to enjoy the Lord and in so doing to be concerned that all men everywhere should glorify and enjoy the Lord. In so glorifying Him, they realise their creaturely glory. At the heart of this call to worship, then, is the call to mission. Worship and mission belong together. In God's call and purpose they are inseparable. Together they belong to the very life and being of the Church in the world. "In worship the Church faces God in the name of Christ on behalf of the world, in gratitude, confession and intercession. In mission, the Church faces the world in the name of Christ on behalf of God as the ambassador of the Gospel of Reconciliation", (*idem*, page 201). In the Church's participation in Jesus Christ, in the Spirit, they belong together.

Worship (in so far as it can be understood as man's activity) is our joyful response to God for all that he has done and is doing for us, in Jesus Christ. It is the joyous offering of ourselves in thanksgiving for the One True Offering to God made on our behalf by God's well-beloved Son, in and through whom alone we are able to draw near to God and are called to be sons. It is even more. It is our participation through the Spirit in the once-and-for-all offering of Christ to the Father. It is our sharing through the Spirit in His Perfect Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension. It is such a sharing in Christ through the Holy Spirit that we (sinners that we are) are made by Grace to stand in Christ's place before the Father (as He stood in our sinful place before the Judgment Seat), and we are accepted by the Father as if we were actually His only well-beloved Son and are able to call Him Father. By Grace through the Holy Spirit we receive and enjoy Christ's Holy Obedient Life to the Father: by Grace in Christ, through the Spirit, we are made to glorify the Father and to serve the Father seeking that all men and all creation glorify the Father, both now and hereafter. In Christ we are made heirs of the Father and rejoice in all the glory and joy of the New Creation.

The Place of Jesus Christ (in worship)

As we read in Colossians 1:15f, "Christ is the visible likeness of the invisible God. He is the first-born Son, superior to all created things. For through Him, God created everything in heaven and on earth, the seen and the unseen things . . . God created the whole universe *through Him* and *for Him*". That is, God has created all people, all creatures, all things, seen and unseen, in this vast universe to manifest forth His glory and to praise Him. Apart from man, creation does not know God and His purposes for creation, and creation is dumb. Only to man, made in His likeness, has God given a mind to understand Him and a mouth to speak forth His praises. Man is given dominion over all creation, to express on behalf of all creatures the praises of God, so that through the lips of man the heavens might declare the glory of God and the firmament show forth His handywork (Psalm 19:1). In worship man is called to gather up, and to voice the worship of all creation. "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and creation realises its creaturely glory in glorifying through the lips of man. Man was made to be that creature among all creatures, who might know the Creator and on behalf of all creatures worship God" (*Reports* 1970, p.192).

Because of man and his sin, creation fails to glorify God as God intended. Instead the whole of creation groans in travail waiting for the Redemption of man. Creation waits until man is Redeemed and renewed, in order that, in and through man, all creation might glorify God.

The glorious news of the Gospel is that God does not abandon His purpose for man and for all creation. God has come Himself into this created world. In Jesus He has taken on Himself our creaturely existence. He, although remaining God, has become man for us and for all creation. (Col. 2:9,10; Eph. 1:10, 20-23). Christ

Jesus came to be the Lord and the Priest of all creation, and thereby came to do, for men and for all creation, what man in his sinfulness fails to do. He offered to God, on our behalf, as Man and thereby as one of us and for us, in our stead, a perfect Holy obedience, through His Life, Death, Resurrection and Ascension into the presence of the Father. And in and through that perfect offering of His entire Life, He offers to the Father on our behalf and on behalf of all creation, praise and glory. As Man, in our name, He worships and glorifies the Father (Hebrews 1:2. 3:2,16f). In the words of the General Assembly Report, (p.192), the Good News, "the Gospel of Grace is that He assumes our life, takes on our responsibilities, offers to the Father a life of unbroken communion and obedience, dies our death, rises in our humanity, returns to the Father as the One True Man before God, the One True Servant of the Lord, the One True Worshipper, Who now, by His Holy Spirit, leads us in our worship. As our High Priest, He is the Head of all creation, the Head of the Church, the Leader of the worshipping community, who lives in communion with the Father to intercede for all His creatures.'

The New Testament speaks of worship as that which we do together on the Lord's Day, when we come together to meet the Lord Jesus Christ and praise Him for all that He has done for us and when, in the Spirit, we thankfully are made to share anew in Christ, in His union with the Father and in His Lordship over all things and over all creation.

The New Testament also speaks of worship as the offering of ourselves in a life of obedience and service in Jesus Christ. Paul says: "Offer yourselves as a living sacrifice to God, dedicated to His service and pleasing to Him. This is the true worship that you should offer." (Romans 12:1)

The worship which we do together on the Lord's Day passes over and into the worship which is the offering of our whole life to the Father in Christ, and is thereby a continued sharing throughout the whole of our life, in the perfect offering of Christ to the Father.

In either use of the term 'worship', and in the end we must understand worship in wholeness as involving our entire life, Christ is 'the High Priest in the Most Holy Place', the *Leiturgos* (Hebrews 8:2), the Minister of the Sanctuary, the One True Worshipper, Who leads us in all our worship: the One in and through whom alone, and in union with him, we worship the Father, in the way that is acceptable to the Father. Christ is the High Priest and at the same time the One True Offering which God has provided and which alone is acceptable to Him.

Now Christ's worship of the Father on our behalf, His Ministry for us and for our salvation is two-fold. First, there is that one-and-for-all event in which leaving the life of glory and eternal communion with the Father, He became the Son of Man, that we sons of men might become sons of God by Grace and be drawn into the Son's communion with the Father, so that, by the Holy Spirit, we might call Him "Father, Dear Father". This event stretches from His birth to His death, to His resurrection and Ascension to the right hand of the Father, that is, to His return as our representative to the Presence of the Father.

Secondly, there is His continuing heavenly ministry, inaugurated by His resurrection and ascension and which continues on into eternity. Jesus as Son of Man reigns as Lord and, as Man, He continues to pray for us. At the same time, His very Person, bearing the wound-print and the scars of His once and for all sacrifice for us, is a living intercession for us pleading our cause. Through the outpouring of His Holy Spirit He relates us to, and implants us into, His expiatory sacrifice, and draws us into His life of communion with the Father.

There is a further two-fold ministry of Christ. He comes as God, to represent God to man, and, at the same time, he comes as Man, to represent man to God. God demands that we worship Him. For God created all men and all creation for His glory, that we might worship Him, praise Him, serve Him and be the sons of God that we are meant to be (Hebrews 2:10). At the same time, God gives Himself to us in the Incarnate Son, that we might worship Him as He requires. As the Incarnate Son, as Man, as our Elder Brother, Kinsman and Representative, He takes hold of us, atones for our sin, cleanses us, prays for us, gives to us His own Perfect Human Life, that united with him and in Him we are made to approach the Father, to be united with the Father and to glorify the Father, as He requires. That is, God demands our worship in Christ, and at the same time, in Christ, He gives to us what He Himself demands of us. In wonderful love, He gives Himself to us in Christ and thereby, draws us near to Himself and unites us with Himself, in Christ. We are accepted by God, not because we are worthy or have offered worthy worship. We are altogether unworthy. We are accepted "in spite of our unworthiness, because He has provided for us a Worship, a Way, a Sacrifice, a Forerunner in Christ our Leader and Representative, and our worship is our joyful Amen to that Worship" (*idem* p.194-195). Our worship is a thankful, joyful appropriation of Christ and of His Worship of the Father, through the Spirit, so that all that is of Christ is ours by Grace through the Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, and by Grace, His Life of obedience to the Father, His Death to our sin, his Resurrection, His Ascension (His Faith in the Father) His very Sonship and Life of communion with the Father, His Reign in Glory, are all ours! God has come in Christ and (as Calvin says) has effected with us a wonderful exchange (*mirifica commutatio*) and this wonderful exchange, whereby we are reconciled to the Father, is enshrined at the heart of all worship, whether that worship be what we do together on the Lord's Day of the worship of the whole of life.

The Word of God in Worship

We have dealt at length with worship and with Christ in worship. Now we are able to turn to the Word of God in Worship. Our understanding of Christ in worship guides and controls our understanding of the Word and provides and controls the content of the Word that we preach.

Christ Jesus is central to all our worship. Likewise the Word is central to all our worship of God. Christ is the One True Worshipper (the *leiturgos*), whose worship alone is acceptable to the Father. Likewise the Word of God is that Word through which alone the Father can be known and worshipped and whose praise of the Father alone is acceptable. Christ as the One True Worshipper leads us in our worship, by giving Himself to us, so that by Grace His Worship of the Father is our worship and our worship of the Father is a response of thanksgiving for Christ. Likewise the Word of God leads us in our worship of the Father. It comes and lodges within us, revealing the Father and evoking, guiding and controlling our response of praise and adoration of the Father. We receive God's Grace through the Word and we return to God in thanksgiving the Grace that we have received through the Word. Grace (*eucharis*) is what we receive. Thanksgiving (*eucharistia*) is the Grace that we give back to the Father.

Without the Word and the Spirit (and the Spirit works through the Word) we could not worship the Father. Our worship would be an act of man, attempted in our strength and in our understanding, and, as such, it would be unacceptable to God. Consider the difference which we all have experienced between our attempting to pray to God in our own strength, when prayer becomes an effort of man, and the prayer that is evoked after we have encountered God in His Word and listened to Him speaking to us. This time prayer is altogether different. We pray along the lines of the Word that we have read and heard, using the message that we have received and incorporating it into our prayer. Now the Word evokes and controls our praying and we pray with an ease and a freedom and a power, not otherwise enjoyed for we are using God's word, not our word in prayer. And what is more, such prayer is in union with Jesus Christ, where our prayer is being joined with His Prayer and His praying by grace, becomes our praying as now He is praying in us and through us. Such praying is praying in the Word and in the Spirit. We listen to what God has said, we hear what God has promised and ask God to fulfil what He has promised within the context in which we are placed. We claim from God the answer to what He Himself has promised. Such prayer is in accord with the Father's will. Such praying is in His Name. It is prayer together, and in union, with Jesus Christ and is the kind of prayer of which Jesus said, "Whatever you ask in my Name that will I do" (John 14:13). But it is prayer evoked by the Word, guided and controlled by the Word and prayed in and through the understanding of the Word and in and through the power of the Word. Without the Word it would not be, and could not be, true prayer acceptable to God. And without the Word our whole worship of God, which is a response of praise and prayer *to*, and *through*, and *in*, the Word, would not be true worship, acceptable to God. Christ and the Word together are central to all worship.

Christ is the Word of God Who became flesh and lived on this earth as a Man, in order to bring us to God that we might become sons of God. The Word of God, when truly proclaimed in worship today, is that same Divine-human Word Who is Christ Jesus. He comes to us in the form of the Word and seeks to become flesh and blood in us (to be born in us), so that we might become sons of God. Only by the Word of God being welcomed by us and coming to live in us does Christ Jesus live within us. Only so are we filled by the Spirit, possessed by the Spirit, made sons of God and heirs of the Kingdom, able to serve and glorify God.

The Word of God, this Divine-human Word that is Christ Jesus, is the Divine-human Word that is witnessed to in Scripture. The Human word of Scripture is the bearer of, the witness to, the Divine-human Word that is Christ the Saviour, the One True Worshipper, the Lord of all. This is why in our Reformed worship, the Bible occupies the central place that it does. It inspires the words of our hymns, evokes and guides our prayers: and it is placed in the pulpit, or on the lectern, as a symbolic reminder that the minister's sole task is to read and to seek to make known the message of the Bible, the Good News of Christ, so that people might encounter Christ and share today in His New Life in union with the Father.

All this means that there is no room, nor place, in worship, for man's word, or man's opinions. Other books have their place in their own spheres, man's opinions are important and can be voiced and heard in meetings and discussion groups and in conversations and in print. But they have no place in worship. The only word which has a place in worship is the Word of God, the Word that is Jesus Christ and Who is witnessed to in the sacred Scriptures. This alone is the Word of authority and power, the Redeeming Word which can change lives, bringing man to repentance and to faith in God and to the joyous acceptance of His Salvation.

Preaching and Prayer

Prayer is the necessary accompaniment of preaching. In preaching, God comes and encounters His people in the context of prayer.

It is the duty of the Church, and our duty, yours and mine, to approach Scripture in a spirit of humility, of acceptance, of expectation, prepared to meet the Lord, to hear what He has to say to us, and to obey Him. That is not in itself easy. It is contrary to the spirit of the natural man. We need to pray for such acceptance

of Scripture, such humility and the readiness to hear the Word of God which will disturb us, challenge us, change us and call us to obey the Father. We cannot create such an attitude in ourselves. We cannot bring ourselves to that attitude and to that place where we will hear God speaking. Only God can do that for us, but it is something which God wants to do for us and will do for us, as we pray.

Again, the Word of God comes to us in Scripture in human words. To accept, to hear, to understand and appropriate that Word for preaching and teaching, we must interpret Scripture in a faithful and true way. Yet that may not be easy. Scripture, despite its humanity, is not always easy to understand. It can only be grasped and understood in terms of the Living Word (the *logos*) to which it points. In John 8:43 Jesus said: "Why do you not understand my speech (*lalia*)? Even because you cannot hear my Word (*logos*)." The human speech (the *lalia*) of Jesus cannot be understood in itself, but only in terms of the Word (the *logos*) that speaks it and stands above it and behind it. Our natural ears cannot hear the Word (the *logos*) of Jesus, nor can our natural minds understand it. There is a veil concealing it from us, just as there was a veil concealing the Presence of the Son of God in the man Jesus, to natural men. That veil can only be drawn aside by the Father. Our ears have to be opened by the Holy Spirit if we would hear the Word (the *logos*) which alone will allow us truly to understand and interpret the human speech of Jesus, and not only His human speech but that human word which is Scripture.

On the other hand, there is no revelation of the Word (the *logos*) apart from the human word (the *lalia*). For, "It is the work of the *logos* to explain the *lalia*, which it adopts, and the work of the *lalia* to reveal the *logos* which it serves" (T.F. Torrance. "Essays in Christology for Karl Barth", p.28). This was true for those who listened to Jesus when on earth, and it is equally true for all who would approach Scripture in the right way and hear God speaking to them today in the sphere of Scripture. "The Word of God which speaks to us through Holy Scripture in human words is to be understood and appropriated as we interpret the human words (*lalia*) faithfully in accordance with the objective Word (*logos*) which adopted and moulded it as its instrument of communication, and which still uses it to communicate to us the divine revelation." (idem p.28).

Again, the Word of God which we are called to receive and appropriate and which does not come to us in abstraction from the human word (the *lalia*), comes in concrete historic situations. It comes in the actual human situations in which the Word of God has addressed itself to men and women in the Old and New Testament, in and through the actual humanity which the Word has called into subservience as a worthy instrument for its revealing purpose. It can only be received, heard and appropriated in these actual situations. That is to say, if we and our people would hear the Word of God in the preaching of Scripture, then we and they must allow ourselves to be drawn by the Spirit into those concrete original spheres in the Old and New Testament, in which the Word of God came in creating, redeeming, sanctifying power. We must allow ourselves to stand where the men and women of the Bible stood under the impact of the Word of God, experiencing the same cleansing, purifying, renewing, sanctifying power of the Word and the Spirit. The Word of God comes in historical settings, and we must allow ourselves, through the Holy Spirit, to be placed in these concrete historic settings of Scripture. True preaching is not the preaching of abstract moral and spiritual generalisations and principles. It is the presentation of these concrete historic settings (and for that we need arduous exegetical study), in order that we and our people might live into these situations and might, like the men and women of the Old and New Testament, encounter the cleansing, renewing, life-giving Word of God. This is not within the ability of the preacher as a man. Yet this is what he is called to do and what God will do for him, for his people, in the context of prayer, as we ask Him.

Again, we are not called to be concerned with the human speech of the Bible as something in itself, as if it were, or could be, independent of the Word of God to which it points. We are not called to be concerned with the humanity and the historical, cultural context of the men and women of the Bible, in themselves. All without exception point away from themselves to the Word of God which has confronted them, laid hold on them and drawn them into its saving work. Yet, much biblical study and preaching seems to be of this order and preoccupied with the human speech of the Bible and then go on to understand the Word of God. We can only understand the *lalia* in terms of the *logos*, just as we can only hear the *logos* through the *lalia*. That is to say, true preaching, which is presenting the concrete situations in which the Word of God came to men and women in the Old and New Testament, is the preaching of the Living Word. It is the preaching of a Saving Gospel where we and our people today encounter the Living Word who is God, and where people are transformed, changed, reconciled to God, born again into the Kingdom of God. True preaching leads to the saving of men and women and therefore only takes place in the context of prayer, where we and our people are praying.

We cannot preach the Word of God simply as a result of diligent study, or human ability. Because then it would not be preaching of the Word of God. It would remain as man's word, unless, and until, God by His Grace works the miracle where preacher and hearer receive, hear, understand and appropriate the Living Word of God and are transformed and renewed by it.

The Content of Preaching

We are called to preach Christ Jesus. He is the one to whom all Scripture bears witness and therefore the content of all true preaching.

In preaching Christ we are presenting, in frail human words, a Living Lord, a Personal Saviour, who comes to us, through the word preached, in Mercy and Judgement, in Love and salvation. This is the wonder and the miracle that takes place in true preaching. Christ, having commanded us so to preach, comes as He promised and Himself confronts men and women in love and Saving Power and gives Himself to them for renewal and reconciliation with the Father. But it is always a Person who is proclaimed, as it is a Person who meets, confronts, gives Himself to us and saves us. It is not an idea, nor a creed nor a doctrine. Creeds, doctrines, have their place in the teaching of the Church, but worship is the place of personal encounter where the Living God comes to us men, in Christ Jesus and where we, in Jesus, are drawn into fellowship with the Father. The Gospel we proclaim in worship is the Saving Person of Jesus Christ.

Returning to what we said earlier, Christ exercises a two-fold ministry. First, there is the once-and-for-all event of His coming to earth at Bethlehem, His Life and Death and Resurrection and Ascension, when he returned to the Presence of the Father, on our behalf, bearing our humanity with him. And, secondly, there is His continuing heavenly ministry when He lives to make intercession, when He continues to pray and to work, coming to us today in the form of the Holy Spirit, seeking to implant us into His Death and Resurrection, so that we might joyfully, thankfully share in His Risen Life in fellowship with the Father.

If we proclaim only the first aspect of His Ministry and omit the second, then the event of Christ's Death on the Cross and His Resurrection become the instrumental cause of our faith and salvation today. The event of the Cross and the empty tomb gives rise to the event of our faith today. But what primarily matters is our faith, and how we acquire faith, and the "signs" and "evidence that we have acquired faith. This has been characteristic of much preaching in Scotland (as my brother James has emphasised). Here, there is a lack of emphasis on the Person of Christ alive today, indeed, there is a lack of present communion with the Risen Christ and with the Father. The emphasis is turned from the Person of Christ to our selves, to our need for repentance and for faith. This is why so many Godly people who have sat under this kind of preaching lack assurance of Salvation! The emphasis is not where it should be and where the New Testament puts it, on the Person of the Risen Christ, who comes to us today (as Calvin says) clothed with His Death and Resurrection in order to gather us, incorporate us into Himself in His Death and resurrection, that we might, by the gift of Grace and By the Holy Spirit, share in His Fellowship with the Father, and in worshipping, in Christ, worship the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christ is alive. He reigns in union and communion with the Father and we are made through the Holy Spirit to live and reign in Him. If we omit in our preaching the continuing heavenly ministry of Christ, then we lose so much of the reality of the Person of Christ and all that that means.

Again, if we omit from our preaching the continuing heavenly ministry of Christ, and therefore present the event of the cross as that which causes, and gives rise to, the event of our faith, then the way is opened, and the temptation is there to preach what Calvin (*Institutes*, book 3) calls "legal repentance" and not "evangelical repentance". "Legal repentance" is the view that says "Repent, and *if* you repent, God will forgive you". In this view, God our Father has really to be conditioned into being gracious and forgiving toward us. If the event of the cross is the cause, or condition, of the event of our faith, then, in practice, in history, the church has tended to the view that God will only give us the benefits of the cross, that is, faith, salvation, etc., on condition that we repent. The emphasis falls on man and on his repenting: and whereas faith is still proclaimed to be a gift, it now comes to be regarded, like repentance, as a work of man. This view underlies a good deal of evangelical theology and pastoral counselling. Calvin, however, following, as I believe, the New Testament, rejected it. He held to what he calls "evangelical repentance". Here the forgiveness of God is prior to our repentance. The Gospel, the Good News, is that God in Christ Jesus has borne away our sins on the cross, God has forgiven us and redeemed us in Christ. In the light of this, we are commanded to repent and believe. Faith, in this context, is the thankful, joyful acceptance of what God has done for us in Christ Jesus. It is the thankful acceptance of Christ and his salvation. The refusal on our part to obey this command, the refusal to accept the gift of forgiveness and salvation, the gift of life, means that we are lost! We have no share in Christ and His salvation and will be told by Christ, at the last, "Depart, I never knew you". It is *not* good news to be told that *if* we repent, God will forgive. It is *not* good news to be told of the immense weight of responsibility that is ours in conditioning God to be merciful! The Good News is that God *is* Merciful. He *does* love us! He has forgiven us and redeemed us and offers us abundant life, eternal life, simply as a gift. The Good News is God's offered Grace.

Then again (as we said earlier) Jesus Christ has a two-fold ministry wrapped up in His own Person. He is at once God and Man in one Person. As Son of Man He gives us to what He Himself demands of us. He gives us Himself, His Perfect Life of faith and obedience to the Father, lives out for us on our behalf, that, through His wondrous exchange, we may in Him, standing in His place before the Father, inherit all the Promises of the Kingdom and know that we are accepted by the Father as if we were His only Beloved Son.

If we preach only the one aspect of His ministry, namely the first, where He comes to us as God summoning us to repentance, to faith and obedience and service, and if we omit the second aspect of His ministry where Christ comes as Son of Man to give to us all that he demands of us, then we lay on our people a terrible burden of constantly endeavouring to believe and obey! As such, we command and exhort our people to follow and obey the Lord, without showing them how to receive the Power of Jesus Christ and the Power of the Holy Spirit, without which they can never follow and obey Christ. We fail to preach Jesus the Son of Man. As such, the Christian life becomes a matter of duty, lacking both joy and power. As such, our constant theme is "repentance" and "the perseverance of the saints", without which heaven will be shut against us. As such, we omit the ministry of the Holy Spirit Who causes us to share in Christ's victory over sin and death and the world. This failure to preach the Ministry of the Son of Man, has a far-reaching effect on the (Christian) faith and attitude of our people, and it has a far-reaching effect on worship. It gives rise to the tendency, in worship, to lay the whole emphasis on preaching the Word and to leave too little room for the response to the Word on the part of the congregation, and, certainly, little room for a joyous response! This has characterised much worship in the Reformed churches. I remember just such a service which I attended in Basle, in my student days. The preacher was (to use the Swiss term) "positive" in his theological outlook. (We would use the term "conservative".) The service commenced with the signing of two verses of a hymn. This was followed by a brief prayer the length of a collect and a short reading from the Bible. Then followed a sermon of approximately 45 minutes. The service was concluded with the singing of the remaining verse (or verses) of our first hymn and the benediction. The service was one almost entirely of *listening*. There was no orchestra of sung praise or other opportunity for congregational response. This, surely, is far removed from the worship of the New Testament church and far removed from the worship of the Redeemed Church in the Book of Revelation. When we consider the great doxologies in the New Testament, exalting the Saviour, and consider that these were hymns used in worship by the Church in New Testament times, then the type of service which I have mentioned and which took place in Basle, belongs to a different world. The New Testament doxologies are largely hymns praising the Saviour, the Son of Man. Jesus as Man (as well as God) has Redeemed us, and, as Man, the Leader of our worship, He has made on our behalf, a perfect response to the Father, which we could not make. By grace His response, His worship, becomes ours. We share in His response, His worship, and therefore in His fellowship with the Father, through the Holy Spirit and through thanksgiving and faith. Worship, that is, the worship which is a real sharing in Jesus' worship of the Father, and His fellowship with the Father, must allow time and opportunity for joyous, thankful praise, on the part of the congregation. Without that response of praise, our worship does not follow the New Testament pattern and can scarcely be a real sharing in Jesus Christ. If we fail to reach the vicarious Humanity of Jesus Christ, then our worship will lack warmth, and Saving Power and joy!

Again, if we fail to reach the vicarious Humanity of Jesus, the Ministry of the Son of Man, then we probably never mention the fact that in Christ, in worship, man is called to voice praise to God, on behalf of all creation. As we said earlier, creation in itself is dumb and man is called on behalf of all creatures and all creation, to voice praise and thanksgiving to God. Consider how frequently this thought, or summons, occurs in the Psalms.

There are other issues which originally I had thought to take up in this paper, but time does not allow: what form should the response of praise of the congregation, to Jesus Christ, take?

How do we know that our preaching is the Gospel, and not just our opinions of what the Gospel is?

How far should we say that the Gospel is political?

I conclude, by re-affirming my basic theme, that the Word in worship, its importance and significance, must be understood in terms of our understanding of Jesus Christ, and not the other way round.