

STUDY 7

The Word as Active Revelation

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This paper focuses on the active revelation of the Word of God. This necessitates some clarification as well as some distinction. We need to clarify what we mean by the Word of God, and distinguish that Word from other things. To do this, we'll take some material from historical theology, some from biblical theology, and then see how our comments comport with the testimony of John's gospel.

JESUS: GOD'S LIVING VOICE

In the speaker's notes for this school, Ian Pennicook relates the following exchange between Karl Barth and a student:

Student: 'Sir, don't you think that God has revealed himself in other religions and not only in Christianity?' Barth: 'No, God has not revealed himself in any religion, including Christianity. He has revealed himself in his Son' (Karl Barth [1886–1968], during his 1963 Princeton lectures).

We might have expected such a response from Barth, given his consistent and insistent Christocentrism, but his pithy reply shines an intense spotlight on the unique treasure that is the *Christian* doctrine of revelation.

Barth was nothing if not a faithful witness to God's Voice. In the theology of the Reformers, the Word always preceded the word (Scripture). The Word of God (i.e. God the Son) was always primary—not simply chronologically, but theologically. A mere chronological primacy would still allow for a form of dualism alien to the witness of Scripture. The eternal Word has no deistic relationship to the Bible, the Church or the world. In this regard Barth bore faithful testimony not only to the Reformation but to the living Word of God, in whom alone God speaks.

For the Reformers, Christ was the hermeneutical key to God's active revelation¹ and to the response of worship which that revelation created. God's revelation was inseparable from his saving deeds in Christ, in and through whom we have been firmly grasped by the grace of God. Both Lutheran and Reformed theology was essentially doxological—but doxology *from* grace, rather than towards it. Lutheran and Reformed worship retained a liturgical richness which preserved the best elements of earlier centuries, but which removed the *mediation of infused* grace via

¹ The term 'active revelation', should not imply an equal and opposite 'passive revelation', an oxymoron in the grammar of biblical theology.

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the sacramental/priestly conduit that had necessitated the reformation itself.² The Word was placed in the centre of the revised liturgies, with the sacraments taking their place only in connection with listening to the Word, as heard in the reading of Scripture and in the preaching of the gospel, all in the vernacular.

BUT WHAT OF SCRIPTURE?

We are justified in speaking of the Scriptures as God's word in written form, but only in such a way that exalts their testimony to Christ. While in one sense the written word reveals the things of God, the Scriptures themselves (along with the whole creation) have their origin and purpose in Christ. All things came into being through him, even biblical propositions about him. Without him *nothing* came into being that has come into being (John 1:3). The written word bears testimony to the eternal Creator-Word. Thus we live under his present and active Lordship, rather than under the regime of a book *per se*.³ He speaks, and listening to *his* voice 'new life the dead receive'.

JESUS PREACHES HIS GOSPEL

The Word of God speaks to the world through Scriptures, but especially as they are *preached*.⁴ The preached word, in the power of the Spirit, beats with the heart of the Word become flesh. Preaching is the prolongation of the Voice of the Father in the

² The later branches of Reformed theology often stripped public and private worship bare of all liturgical elements, lest even an inadvertent attachment to priesthood, ceremony and sacrament should arise which might presage a return to medieval sacramentalism, thereby leading to the transgression of the first two commandments. In the Puritan congregations in England and New England—and even more in the later form of Reformed theology and worship which made their way into the remoter parts of Scotland—public worship became a very plain event indeed. This was not all bad, but neither was it all good. Such bare public worship bears little resemblance to the worship of Calvin himself, or Knox in Scotland, for example, but it did maintain strict focus on the preaching event and the reading of Scripture.

³ While Islam historically recognised both Judaism and Christianity as religions of the Book, in reality the place of the Bible in Christian theology is vastly different from the place accorded to the Koran in Islam.

⁴ Luther (though the quote eludes me) referred to the importance of hearing the Word in the preaching of the gospel, even more than in reading the text of Scripture. Lutheran theology historically maintained a strong emphasis on the auricular nature of the gospel, captured powerfully in Bonhoeffer:

The death and the life of a Christian are not determined by his own resources; rather he finds both only in the Word that comes to him from the outside, in God's Word to him. The Reformers expressed it this way: Our righteousness is an 'alien righteousness,' a righteousness that comes from outside of us (*terra nos*). They were saying that the Christian is dependent on the Word of God spoken to him. He is pointed outward, to the Word that comes to him. The Christian lives wholly by the truth of God's word in Jesus Christ, which assures him salvation and righteousness. He is alert as possible to this Word. Because he daily hungers and thirsts for righteousness, he daily desires the redeeming Word. And it can come only from the outside, and it has come, and comes daily and anew in the Word of Jesus Christ, bringing redemption, righteousness, innocence and blessedness.

But God has put this Word into the mouth of men in order that it may be communicated to other men. When one person is struck by the Word, he speaks it to others. God has willed that we should seek and find His living Word in the witness of a brother, in the mouth of a man. Therefore the Christian needs another Christian who speaks God's word to him. He needs him again and again when he becomes discouraged, for by himself he cannot help himself without betraying the truth. He needs his brother man as a bearer and proclaimer of the divine word of salvation. He needs his brother solely because of Jesus Christ. The Christ in his own heart is weaker than the Christ in the word of his brother; his own heart is uncertain, his brother's is sure.

And that also clarifies the goal of all Christian community: they meet one another as bringers of the message of salvation. As such, God permits them to meet together and gives them community. Their fellowship is founded solely upon Jesus Christ and this 'alien righteousness.' All we can say, therefore, is: the community of Christians springs solely from the Biblical and Reformation message of the justification of man through grace alone; this alone is the basis of the longing of Christians for one another. *Life Together* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1954), pp. 22–3.

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world, through the Church. But there is no revelation—in the pages of Scripture or in the preaching of the gospel—without Christ.⁵ Luther, and no less Calvin, were no bibliolaters. The true authority of the text lay in its witness to the saving work of God in Christ. While Luther especially was vilified for creating a ‘canon within the canon’,⁶ he would not admit of any authority other than the apostolic gospel itself. In this regard, he was one with Paul (e.g. Gal. 1:8–9).

BUT WHAT OF ‘NATURAL REVELATION’?

This is not a paper on apologetics, but broadly speaking apologetic approaches fall into two types: evidentialist and presuppositionist. For the first think Josh MacDowell; for the second, think Cornelius van Til. The one approach presents evidence for the reasonableness of faith; the other assumes an inherent knowledge of God, albeit opposed and suppressed by sinful humanity. Both have something to say. We do give ‘a defence’ (*apologia*) for the hope which lies within us (1 Pet. 3:15) but the hope is Christ. We also recognise that God speaks in and through the creation, and that all people have an innate knowledge of him (Rom. 1:18ff.)—but such revelation only confirms us in our need for Christ, since that revelation, like the Law and conscience, simply condemns us to death. Whichever way we pose the question, the answer is Jesus. Natural revelation is not saving revelation.

⁵ In terms of historical theology the doctrine of revelation has also been co-ordinated with the role of the Spirit. Scripture is *theopneustos*, for example (2 Tim. 3:16; cf. Matt. 22:43; Mark. 12:36; Acts 1:16), when understood as gift from God. On the other hand the reformers emphasised the need for the Spirit to illuminate the meaning of Scriptures (e.g. Calvin, *Institutes* II, 2, 20–21), on the basis of texts such as 1 Cor. 2:12–14; Eph. 1:17–18; 1 John. 2:20, 27; etc.—though it must be stressed that the doctrine of illumination has more to do with *hearing* (i.e. with faith) than with interpretation *per se*. The Spirit on the one hand worked within the personalities and circumstances of the authors of Scripture, and on the other he works in the hearts and minds of we who read and receive their testimony. Naturally, the Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, so we draw no false divisions between the Persons in regard to their combined work. The formula (*omnia opera Trinitas ad extra indivisa sunt*)—meaning that (all) the external actions of God are the work of the entire Trinity—confirms the distinction of the Persons while maintaining the utter unity of their work. The distinction of the Persons lies in their origins (for want of a better term) and relations, but this distinctiveness is expressed in their works *ad extra*. God (in his entirety) speaks to us—revealing himself to us—but *actively* so, embracing us through a fully Trinitarian redemption brought to us in Christ. Thus, it is legitimate to focus on Jesus as *the* revelation of God since the Spirit bears witness to him, and the Father has sent him to proclaim his (i.e. the Father’s) name to the world. In so doing Jesus is the appointed Lord of all creation.

⁶ This is particularly so of Luther, whose German Bible broke entirely new ground. He separated out the Apocrypha; he dared to insert the word *allein* (alone) into Rom. 3:28; and he moved Hebrews and James to different positions within the New Testament. Though he voiced that some books were of different value (notably James, Jude, Hebrews and Revelation), he nonetheless translated them *all* and never ceased to revise and refine the translations of them all.

The process was fascinating:

In the progress of the work he founded a *Collegium Biblicum*, or Bible club, consisting of his colleagues Melancthon, Bugenhagen (Pommer), Cruciger, Justus Jonas, and Aurogallus. They met once a week in his house, several hours before supper. Deacon Georg Rörer (Rorarius), the first clergyman ordained by Luther, and his proof-reader, was also present; occasionally foreign scholars were admitted; and Jewish rabbis were freely consulted. Each member of the company contributed to the work from his special knowledge and preparation. Melancthon brought with him the Greek Bible, Cruciger the Hebrew and Chaldee, Bugenhagen the Vulgate, others the old commentators; Luther had always with him the Latin and the German versions besides the Hebrew. Sometimes they scarcely mastered three lines of the Book of Job in four days, and hunted two, three, and four weeks for a single word. No record exists of the discussions of this remarkable company, but Mathesius says that ‘wonderfully beautiful and instructive speeches were made’.

Philip Schaff, *The History of Luther’s Bible* at <http://www.bible-researcher.com/luther.html>. James Swan provides a balanced analysis of Luther’s approach to Scripture here: http://tquid.sharpens.org/Luther_%20canon.htm.

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THE EMMAUS ROAD IS ALWAYS OURS

Over recent decades many writers have helped to revive our vision of the inherently Christological nature of the Old Testament.⁷ Like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, we are learning again to see Christ in all the Scriptures. How? A few brief examples may help:

In terms of *typology*, tabernacle and temple; cultus and priesthood; exodus and Passover; land and kingdom; as well as the Lord's providential dealings with individuals such as Noah, Abraham (especially at Mt Moriah), Jacob, Joseph, Ruth, David, Solomon, etc. all point beyond themselves to Christ. He is the ark in whom we are saved; he is both Abraham's seed, and the ram in the thicket; he is the Israel of God who—as a countertype to Jacob—inherits the promises by faith while at the same time being the gate of God for the nations; he is the saviour of his brethren, sent ahead of us to prepare a place; he is the king after God's own heart; he is the Sage who rules the kingdom; and he enacts the redemption of which Ruth's story is but one example.

In like manner, *images of Israel* abound: Israel as the vine; as God's son; as the servant of the Lord; as his flock; as his *segullah*; as his wife; as the theatre of his glory; as the object of his covenantal *chen* and *chesed*; among many others. All are fulfilled in Christ. He is *the Vine*; Son; Servant; Shepherd (and Sheep); Treasured Possession; bearer of God's Glory; Covenant Faithfulness of God (as both covenant head and covenant partner); Bridegroom (and, in one sense, Bride . . . if we understand him as the True Israel); etc.

Moreover, the *descriptive names of God* (e.g. Rock, Provider, Righteousness, the One who Sees, Champion, Holy One, Lord of Hosts, Most High, etc.) are all met in Christ's person and work. In terms of *prophetic witness* (for the testimony of Jesus has always been the spirit of prophecy) the entire Old Testament corpus testifies to the coming Seed of Genesis 3:15. The many aspects of *Messianic expectation* which arose out of the conjunction of God's prophetic promises and Israel's experience of exile,⁸ though universally misunderstood by Israel, were none the less fulfilled in Christ. Likewise the whole *history of Israel* prepares us for the coming of Messiah, and he, in turn, acts as the key by which Israel's contemporary experience may be understood.⁹ The apostolic proclamation of Christ is but the exposition of all these things in the light of Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension.

⁷ For example, see O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1980) and *The Christ of the Prophets* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2004); Alec Motyer, *Look the Rock: An Old Testament Background to Our Understanding of Christ* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996); Edmund P. Clowney, *The Unfolding Mystery: Discovering Christ in the Old Testament* (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1991); etc.

⁸ For example, the coming Messiah would vindicate God's holy Name; exalt God's chosen people; defeat God's enemies; rule over the nations and instruct them in *Torah*; establish an eternal Zion kingdom; redeem Israel from exile; gather the scattered flock; and settle them in the resting place of the land forever. With Messiah's appearance, Yahweh would return to the Temple; he would pour out the Spirit; establish his new covenant; bring justice to light; bestow forgiveness on his people; and regenerate the whole creation. Curiously enough, it is men with expectations such as these who crucified Jesus because he did not fulfil any of them—yet that very crucifixion was the means by which they were all secured. The risen Jesus then announced Peace to those who crucified him through the proclamation of his gospel. His word is still so: peace to those who are far off, and peace to those who are near.

⁹ See, for example, T. F. Torrance's profound exposition of this theme in *The Mediation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1982), especially chapter 1, 'The mediation of revelation'.

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JOHN'S GOSPEL: THE LIVING WORD IN OUR FLESH

John's gospel founds all Christian revelation on the Incarnation. The Prologue (John 1:1–17) connects with the narrative (beginning with John's testimony in 1:19) by means of the hinge of John 1:18, 'No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father; he has explained him'. The remainder of John's gospel recounts how *God* has *revealed himself* in *Jesus*. The emphasis is important. Jesus is not just a perfect man, reflecting God; nor is he God only acting out the role of a man. Jesus is God in our nature. John's gospel, therefore, is essentially a treatise on the person of Christ, by which God reveals himself to the world.

Exegetically, John's account of this revelation is multifaceted. For example:

Firstly, John's gospel demonstrates that the work of Creation and the work of Redemption are inseparable. The creator of the Prologue is the Lamb of John's testimony (John 1:1–17; cf. 1:29, 36). The Light of the world shines (i.e. redemptively) in the darkness. The Shepherd who owns the flock dies for the flock. The Bread of heaven is broken for the life of the world. The Resurrection and the Life is crucified dead and buried.

These patterns reflect a consistent theme in Old Testament theology, whereby God the Creator is known in and through his acts of redemption. He creates Israel, not by divine fiat, but by the exodus. He is their Father–Redeemer—their heavenly progenitor and their true *go'el* at the one time. He is the Creator of the world, who at the same time seeks the lost Adam in the garden, and promises a Seed to destroy the works of the serpent. In Israel's cultus, he came with his own propitiation in his hands to meet his wayward son in a new Eden (which the tabernacle was understood to be).

This pattern of Old Testament theology is preserved in the very structure of John's gospel, where the Prologue informs our reading of every part. The Creator—the Word incarnate—comes to seek and save, to heal and restore, to gather and feed, to die and to rise, to intercede (so John 17:5) and to come again in the clouds of glory. Yes, 'tis mystery all, the immortal dies', but John's gospel will not let us hold to a mere Arian view of Jesus' passion. In Jesus, *God* atones, bearing our sins in his body on the tree. In Jesus *God* raises up a new Temple (note implication of 'I will raise it up' in John 2:19) as a dwelling place of his glory. When Jesus rose from the dead *God* arose that his enemies might be scattered. 'With the raising of Jesus, God himself has arisen, to fulfil his promises to all he has created.'¹⁰

Secondly, by means of the I AM sayings John co-ordinates God's *works* in and through Jesus with God's *nature* embodied in Jesus. The predicate I AM statements (e.g. John 6:35, 48, 51; 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 11:25) exegete the absolute I AM statements (John 8:58; cf. 4:26; 6:20; 8:24, 28; 13:19; 18:5, 6). In other words, all that Jesus describes himself as (the Bread of heaven, the Light of the World, the Good Shepherd), is so because of who he is, as I AM incarnate.

¹⁰ J. Moltmann, *Sun of Righteousness Arise!: God's Future for Humanity and the Earth* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010), p. 41. This sheds wonderful light on the many OT passages which cry for God to Arise (e.g. Ps. 3:7; 7:6–7; 10:12; 44:26; 68:1; 74:22; 82:8; 132:8–9; cf. Num. 10:35; 2 Chron. 6:41; Isa. 42:13–14; 51:9–10; etc.). He has arisen in Jesus, and so all of his promises are Yes in the resurrected Lord.

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Moreover, the predicate I AM statements are linked to the *actions* of Christ, not least in the seven signs. He is the Bread (who has fed the multitude in the wilderness); he is the Good Shepherd (who has come to seek and gather his flock and atone for their sins); he is the Light of the world (who has caused the blind to see); etc. In Jesus, God actively reveals himself by exeging his own nature through the humanity of the Son. The works reveal the person. At every point Jesus testifies that he has been *sent* into the world (e.g. John 3:34; 4:34; 5:23–24, 30, 36–38; 6:29, 38–39; etc.), and the I AM absolutes, together with the knowledge of his own eternal nature (e.g. John 17:5) make it clear that Jesus knew who he was and what he had come to do.

The revelation he brings is not passive (as though Jesus' humanity were merely the pattern for us to copy) but active, redeeming humanity to its proper state. In Jesus, the dwelling place of God is with men (John 1:14; cf. Rev. 21:3). Jesus, the God–man, is the *one* Mediator between God and man. He unites God to us and us to God in his person, only by virtue of which he can effectively accomplish his work. Being God he brings *God* to us. Being man he brings *us* to God. There is no passive revelation involved. His *being* as the Incarnate Son is God's revelation, and his *work* is God's salvation, but the latter is impossible without the former:

In him the revealing of God and the understanding of man fully coincided, the whole Word of God and the perfect response of man were indivisibly united in one Person, the Mediator, who was received, believed and worshipped together with God the Father and the Holy Spirit by the apostolic community which he creatively called forth and assimilated to his own mission in the Father. Thus as both the incarnate revelation of God and the embodied knowledge of God, Jesus Christ constitutes in himself the Way, the Truth and the Life through whom alone access to God the Father is freely opened to all the peoples of mankind. That is to say, as the incarnate Word and Truth of God Jesus Christ in his own personal Being is identical with the Revelation which he mediates.¹¹

Thirdly, John shows how Jesus fulfills every element of Old Testament Messianic expectation, albeit in complete contradiction to the widely held ways in which such expectations were viewed. The point of the whole gospel is to show that Jesus is the Christ, and that in believing we might have life in his name (John 20:31). Through the seven signs of chapters 1–11; into the direct teaching about the cross in chapter 12; via the good news of the coming Spirit in chapters 13–16; in and by the magnificent intercession of chapter 17; and through the account of the passion, resurrection and subsequent appearances in chapters 18–21; every element of legitimate messianic expectation is shown to have been fulfilled. Moreover, it is *God* who has done it. He has fulfilled every promise in his incarnate Son, on our behalf, while we were still sinners. And he has done so fully, freely and abundantly. In differing ways the seven signs correlate to elements of the Old Testament narrative, but adorned now with an overarching stress on super abundance and transformation. For example, the water of the old Jewish rites of purification is changed to wine in 'by the bucket load'; Jesus is the *living bread* from heaven, not manna simply to sustain biological life; Christ is *the* good shepherd (fulfilling Ezek. 34:23–24, i.e. '*I Myself* will be their shepherd'), not just a Davidic shepherd simply; Jesus raises the dead to *eternal* life, beyond even the reviving of dead Israel only to die again; etc.

¹¹ T. F. Torrance, *The Mediation of Christ* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), p. 9.

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Fourthly, we hear from Jesus' lips his utter dependence upon the Father for all things (e.g. John 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:19; 14:10; etc.). In his deeds we learn that *the Father* has been the active agent: 'the Father who dwells in me does his works' (John 14:10). In Christ we see the face of the Father (John 14:9; 12:45) not simply because of who Jesus is (as God incarnate), but because of *how* he does what he does. His oneness with the Father is relational, and thereby the Father is revealed for *who he is*, i.e. as the Father always in relationship. This revelation in time corresponds to the nature of God in eternity.¹² It means the Triune life of God is now opened up to us in Jesus (so John 17:3), and the eternal life the Mediator brings to us is *relationally* defined.

Fifthly, the mystery of God's redeeming work in Christ is expounded in a wide variety of Old Testament themes and concepts, all of which place the primacy on God and his work rather than on us and ours. Passover lamb, propitiatory sacrifice and scapegoat (coalescing in John's description of Jesus as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'); temple and priesthood; regeneration and redemption; new exodus terminology; sanctification and intercession; redeeming king and atoning shepherd; the justifying Judge; these and many other allusions to the Old Testament narrative and cultus mean that we are not mute when called to expound the work of God in Christ. But at best they only give *indications* of the nature of that work. We cannot know it in all its height and breadth and length and depth, for it is the work of God. Christ's work on behalf of the elect is but a *witness* to the saving work of God, and not its extent. The whole of the cosmos has been affected by his work, because the death and resurrection of the Son of God is the death and resurrection of the Creator. But the nature and extent of that work, like the work of the priesthood in the OT temple, remains out of sight of prying eyes. It is not secretive (there is nothing Gnostic about it), but it is undiscoverable,¹³ and unknowable apart from God's active revelation in Jesus.

THE ATHANASIAN NECESSITY

In all of this we have no paradigm. Jesus is not *like* anything or anyone (cf. Isa. 40:25; 46:5). Jesus is the embodiment of Israel as also Israel's Lord and God. He is the Priest as also the Lamb; the Temple as also the *laos*; the Great Prophet and Apostle as also the message he proclaims; the Beginning as also the End of all things; the Creator as also the creature; and the Sower as well as the Seed. He is God *as* man, God *for* man; and *man* for God, when all others were against Him.

The person of Christ is a singularity. The work is unique because of his person. How do we understand this one? What can we say of him, from him and in him to the world? Who do we say that he is?

¹² As the systematic theologians put it, the ontological Trinity is one with the economic Trinity.

¹³ The distinction between discoverability and revelation is absolute. The Enlightenment and the modern project which ultimately flowed from it proceeded on the assumption that all things were discoverable to human reason. The Flesh, especially in its religious garb, proceeds on the same basis. The Pharisees searched the Scriptures, but in their blindness stumbled over the stumbling stone. The noetic effects of sin are undiscoverable to human reason, because we believe that our logic is logical. However, it is never *theological* logic. The mind of man cannot subject itself to God any more than can any other part of fallen humanity. It must be brought into subjection by the mighty power of God. God must arise and his enemies be scattered, or belief remains impossible.

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What we must say is: *God* meets us in Jesus. In his book *The Four Great Heresies* (London: A. W. Mowbray, 1955) J. C. W. Wand provides a compact overview of the swings and roundabouts of the early Christological controversies. It is a disturbing book. When you read it you realise that at one time or other you have held each or all of the aberrant positions he describes. But the point is thereby well made. The Church needed to give full attention to the *person* of Christ in such a way that his *work* was not undermined. A Docetic Christ cannot save us any more than an Arian one can. Orthodox Christology (of the Athanasian and Chalcedonian types¹⁴) alone is adequate:

The sinner's reconciliation with a holy God could only be effected by God. And I press the *effectuation* of it . . . with God to will is to do; and the God who willed man's salvation must Himself effect it—not accept it, and not contrive it, but *effect* it. Only He who had lost us could find us, only He who was wronged could forgive, only the Holy One could satisfy His own holiness. To forgive He must redeem. Fully to forgive the guilt He must redeem from the curse. And only the Creator knew the creature so as to redeem. And to know mankind he must live in mankind. To offer for man He must be man.¹⁵

In Jesus, we meet *God as man*.

God in man, with man, or for man, are all true enough, and apply to all the saints of God. Man with God, for God, under God, representing God, or even as the son of God likewise all are true but not sufficient to describe the incarnate Word.

Only in Christ do we see God, and only in Christ, therefore do we hear the *saving* Word of his effective mediation. This is what constitutes God's active revelation in the Word. Therefore we preach nothing but Christ, and him crucified; and we worship the Triune God in, with and through Jesus our Lord.

¹⁴ Finally, the Chalcedonian definition but marks the boundaries of the mystery of the Incarnation; it does not explain it. It stands still as a faithful guardian of the ineffable truth that in Jesus we meet God as man, but we cannot venture beyond the borders without losing the mystery, and thereby falling into error which diminishes the uniqueness of Christ. The Triune relationships allow some parallel understanding (e.g. that the eternal Son can be fully one with the Father without *being* the Father), but again, our language falls short. But our *worship* does not, and this is the very point.

¹⁵ P. T. Forsyth, *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ* (London: Independent Press, 1948), p. 85, his italics.