

Proclamation and Praise

*Hebrews 2:12 and
the Christology of Worship*

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PROCLAMATION AND PRAISE
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The Significance of Hebrews 2:12

HEBREWS 2:12 encapsulates two continuing and complementary post-ascension activities of Christ, with many implications for a richer and more biblical view of preaching and corporate worship.

Proclamation (2:12a)

“I will proclaim Your name to my brethren,”

The Passage

Jesus is addressing His Father in both halves of 2:12. In the first clause we see His intention to proclaim the Father’s Name, that is, His nature, to those whom He is not ashamed to call His brethren (2:11).

This is consonant with much which we have already seen in the context. As earlier mentioned, there is an emphasis in chapters 1 and 2 on hearing the message of God: as proclaimed through His Old Testament messengers (1:2); climactically, definitively and supremely through His Son (1:2; 2:3b); and through those whom He delegates to carry on this communication (2:3b). Jesus’ status as God’s ultimate Messenger is also suggested by his appellation as “the Apostle . . . of our confession” in 3:1.

In addition, it should be remembered, especially in light of 3:1 and the following contrast with Moses (who was the supreme Old Testament messenger of God), that Peter in Acts 3:22 claims that Jesus is the ultimate fulfillment of the “prophet like Moses” promised in Deuteronomy 18:

[Moses said,] The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen. . . . [God said,] “I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him” (Deut 18:15, 18).

Jesus, the prophet like Moses, came as God’s spokesman, and hence must be listened to.

Thus Acts 3:22 hints at His role as proclaimer and redeemer, which is then so succinctly stated in Hebrews 2:12:

Here the Son is heard addressing the Father, promising that He would execute the charge which had been given Him. The Greek word for “declare” is very emphatic and comprehensive. It means, To proclaim and publish, to exhibit and make known. To declare God’s “Name” signifies to reveal what God is, to make known His excellencies and counsels. This is what Christ came here to do: see John 17:6, 26. None else was competent for such a task, for none knoweth the Father but the Son (Matt. 11:27).¹

Other Passages and Insights

There are a host of other Scriptures which speak to the issue of Christ’s revelatory ministry, past and present; and

1. Pink, *Hebrews*, 122.

commentators and theologians have given insights into this subject as well.

JESUS' EARTHLY MISSION

A great many passages from the gospels make it clear that Jesus' mission while on earth was to deliver God's message and reveal the Father.²

2. "All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). "The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me" (Luke 10:16). "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him" (John 1:18). "He bears witness to what he has seen and heard, yet no one receives his testimony. . . . For he whom God has sent utters the words of God, for he gives the Spirit without measure. The Father loves the Son and has given all things into his hand" (John 3:32, 34–35). "So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel'" (John 5:19–20). "So Jesus answered them, 'My teaching is not mine, but his who sent me'" (John 7:16). "They said to him therefore, 'Where is your Father?' Jesus answered, 'You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also'" (John 8:19). "I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him.' They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father. So Jesus said to them, 'When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me'" (John 8:26–28). "I speak of what I have seen with my Father" (John 8:38a). "For I have not spoken on my own authority, but the Father who sent me has himself given me a commandment—what to say and what to speak. And I know that his commandment is eternal life. What I say, therefore, I say as the Father has told me" (John 12:49–50). "If you had known me, you would have known

JESUS' CONTINUING MINISTRY OF REVELATION

There are also a number of Scriptures which speak of or imply the continuation of Jesus' ministry of revealing the Father *after* His glorification.

One remarkable passage along these lines is found in the Messianic Psalm 40, verses 6–8a of which figure so prominently in Hebrews 10. In the verses of Psalm 40 *immediately following* those quoted in Hebrews 10:5–9, we read:

I have *told* the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have *not restrained my lips*, as you know, O Lord. I have *not hidden* your deliverance within my heart; I have *spoken* of your faithfulness and your salvation; I have *not concealed* your steadfast love and your faithfulness from the great congregation (Ps 40: 9–10).

my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.' Philip said to him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.' Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, "Show us the Father?"' (John 14:7–9). "No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you" (John 15:15). "Glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. And this is eternal life, that they know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do" (John 17:1c–4). "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave Me out of the world; now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me" (John 17:6–8). "I have given them your word" (John 17:14a). "O righteous Father, even though the world does not know you, I know you, and these know that you have sent me. I made known to them your name" (John 17:25–26a).

The writer of Hebrews explicitly tells us that Isaiah 40:6–8a are the words of Jesus Himself, so it is only natural to regard the following verses that way as well. There he repeatedly shows His intention (in past tense, prophetically) to proclaim God’s nature and deliverance to the “congregation.”³

A number of other New Testament passages further highlight the idea of Christ’s continuing ministry of revelation:

1. In Matthew 11:27, Jesus says, “All things have been handed over to Me by My Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father; nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.” There is no reason to think, especially in light of the other evidence, that this does not have continuing validity.

2. Speaking on the evening before His crucifixion, Jesus speaks of the coming ministry of the Spirit as one of continuing Jesus’ revelatory ministry:

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you. All that the Father has is mine; therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you (John 16:12–15).

3. The term לְקַדְּשׁ is used in both verse 9 and 10, and is translated by the LXX as συναγωγῆ in verse 10 (LXX 39:11), but as ἐκκλησίᾳ in verse 9 (LXX 39:10)! Once again it is intriguing to see how the author of Hebrews chooses an LXX text which includes ἐκκλησίᾳ and identifies the words as being Christ’s (as with Psalm 22:22/Hebrews 2:12); and there is also here a striking similarity of theme with Hebrews 2:12a.

3. Jesus is certainly looking past the cross when he says in John 16:25: “I have said these things to you in figures of speech. *The hour is coming* when I will no longer speak to you in figures of speech but will tell you plainly about the Father.”

4. On the same evening He also said in His prayer to the Father, “I have made Your name known to them, and *will make it known*” (John 17:26).

5. Luke begins the sequel to his gospel by writing, “The first account I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus *began* to do and teach . . .” (Acts 1:1). The book of Acts is intended to be Luke’s account of what Jesus *continued* “to do and teach.”

6. The question πῶς δὲ πιστεύσωσιν οὗ οὐκ ἤκουσαν in Romans 10:14 should properly be translated as it is in the NASB, “How will they believe in Him *whom* they have not heard?”⁴ As Morris puts it, “The point is that

4. A great number of translations, however, from the AV to the ESV (and including the NJB, NAB, RSV, NIV and NLT) obscure the correct meaning when they translate it as, “How are they to believe in him *of whom* they have never heard?” (ESV). Blass/Debrunner/Funk observe that the normal Greek usage with the verb ἀκούειν is: “the person whose words are heard stands in the genitive, the thing (or person . . .) about which (or whom) one hears in the accusative” (*A Greek Grammar*, 95 #173). According to this rule, since the genitive is used in 10:14, the correct translation is “whom” and not “of whom.” Surprisingly, Bauer/Arndt/Gingrich/Danker seem to side with the translations rather than the grammar, in citing this text as an example of ἀκούω “with the genitive of the person”; however, circular reasoning seems to be at work, as Romans 10:14 is the *only* text cited as an example of such a genitive use with that verb! (*A Greek-English Lexicon*, 32).

Many commentators, on the other hand, in spite of the translations acknowledge the clear implication of the grammatical construction in its normal usage, and prefer the translation “whom” rather than “of whom”: so Barrett, *Romans*, 204; Cranfield, *Romans*, 534; Morris,

Christ is present in the preachers; to hear them is to hear him.”⁵ Barrett similarly states, “Christ must be heard either in his own person, or in the person of his preachers, through whom his own word (v. 17) is spoken; otherwise faith in him is impossible.”⁶ For Cranfield, too, “the thought is of their hearing Christ speaking in the message of the preachers.”⁷ Christ is still speaking through the agency of servants who faithfully proclaim his message.

7. We find a continuation of the same idea in Romans 10:17: “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ [διὰ ῥήματος χριστοῦ].” Grammatically χριστοῦ can be taken as either a subjective genitive (“the word *about Christ*”) or an objective genitive (“the word *of or from Christ*”—“i.e., through Christ’s speaking the message by the mouths of his messengers”⁸). Because of the proximity and connection with verse 14 (a connection observed by Cranfield⁹ and Barrett¹⁰), it is probably better to see this as a subjective genitive; however, Morris prefers to see a double meaning of the genitive at play here:

It is possible to understand this expression either as referring to the teaching of the historical Jesus passed on in the church or to the teaching of the exalted Lord, the Lord of the church.

Romans, 390; Murray, *Romans*, 58.

5. Morris, *Romans*, 390.

6. Barrett, *Romans*, 204.

7. Cranfield, *Romans*, 534.

8. *Ibid.*, 537.

9. *Ibid.*

10. Barrett, *Romans*, 205.

Probably it is both, for there seems no reason for separating the two.¹¹

Regardless of which conclusion is drawn on the genitive construction, Morris' conclusion holds true and is well taken:

Whether we take this to mean "the word about Christ" or "the word from Christ," it locates the content of the preaching in what God has given, not in what the preacher has thought up.¹²

8. A similar construction is found in Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ [ὁ λόγος τοῦ χριστοῦ] richly dwell within you, with all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with thankfulness in your hearts to God." In this case commentators are more divided over whether τοῦ χριστοῦ is a subjective or an objective genitive. Bruce¹³ and Lightfoot¹⁴ see a subjective genitive; their case may be strengthened by the fact that, unlike the common ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, the phrase here is the only occurrence in the New Testament and may be seen as parallel in meaning to ῥήματος χριστοῦ in Romans 10:17; though O'Brien sides with the objective genitive, he allows that the subjective reading is possible and would suggest "that Christ himself is the speaker when his word is proclaimed."¹⁵ Interestingly, the New Living Translation renders the second clause of 3:16: "Use his words to teach and counsel each other."

11. Morris, *Romans*, 392.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Simpson and F. Bruce, *Ephesians and Colossians*, 283.

14. Lightfoot, *Colossians and Philemon*, 224.

15. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, 206.

John Murray offers the following supporting observations about the continuing revelatory ministry of Jesus in the Church:

The Gospel, in distinction from the Acts, is concerned with what Jesus began to do and teach. So what Luke records in the present treatise is what Jesus *continued* to do and teach. The Gospel of Luke closes with the ascension of Christ into heaven; the book of Acts is therefore concerned with the doing of teaching of Christ from his exalted glory. . . . Prejudice is done to the work of Christ and to our faith in him when we overlook or even fail to emphasize the continued ministry of Christ in both doing and teaching. He is ever active in the exercise of his prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices.¹⁶

16. Murray, "The Living Saviour," 40–41. He goes on to add: "The fact that Jesus continued to teach after his ascension is of paramount importance for the authority of Christ in the teaching of the apostles and in the books of the New Testament. Prior to his ascension Christ's teaching was directly by word of mouth. But afterwards he taught by a different mode. He taught by the ministry of appointed witnesses and inspired writers. The New Testament, all of which was written after Jesus' ascension, is not one whit less the teaching of our Lord than that delivered verbally during the days of his flesh. How utterly false it is to set up a contrast between the authority of Jesus' spoken words and the authority of the New Testament as Scripture. The latter is the teaching of Christ given in his own appointed way after his ascension.

"We are reminded of Jesus' word to the disciples: 'I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come he will guide you into all truth' (John 16:12,13). It is from his own lips the certification of Luke's statement in our text. The guiding of the Holy Spirit into all truth does not suspend Jesus' own speaking. 'I have yet many things to say unto you.' But he says these things through the Holy Spirit and thus there is the seal of both divine persons, the Son and the Spirit. Let us prize with the ardour of our whole soul what Jesus continues to do, and teach. He is the living, acting, and teaching Lord."

William Tait, after reminding us that the risen Lord taught His disciples during the forty days leading up to ascension (as Acts 1:3 makes clear), adds this insight:

Nor did his ascension put a period to this blessed work: he has been engaged in it ever since, and is engaged in it still. All who in any generation, have known the Father's name, and all who know it now, have learnt it from his teaching. None else is competent to teach it. For "no man," Jesus himself declares, "knoweth the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11:27). This blessed work is Christ's delight, my brethren. . . . The invisible Father shall never be known save in and through the Son; and therefore as Jesus shall delight to teach, his people shall delight to learn of him.¹⁷

JESUS SPEAKING THROUGH HIS WORD
AND BY HIS SERVANTS

Obviously the way Jesus speaks to us of the Father's glory is different now than the way He did so during His earthly ministry. Owen identifies the contrast:

There are two ways whereby the Lord Christ declared this name of God: (1) In *his own person*; and that both before and after his sufferings. . . . Thus in the days of his flesh, he instructed his disciples and preached the gospel in the synagogues of the Jews and in the temple, declaring the name of God unto them. So also after his resurrection he conferred with his apostles about the kingdom of God, Acts 1. (2) By *his Spirit*; and both in the effusion of it upon his disciples, enabling them personally to preach the gospel

17. Tait, *Meditationes Hebraicae*, 160–61.

unto the men of their own generation, and in the inspiration of some of them, enabling them to commit the truth unto writing for the instruction of the elect unto the end of the world.¹⁸

Now Jesus works through the appointed means of the Scriptures (inspired by the Holy Spirit, whom He sent to teach the apostles and bring to their remembrance the things He had said, John 14:26) and through the gifted preachers and teachers He gives to the Church (Eph 4:11–13). He continues to speak through His chosen means and spokesmen: “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me” (Luke 10:16).

Christ’s ministry of proclaiming the Father’s name to His brethren (Hebrews 2:12a) is incarnated in the Church’s worship as the Word is set forth in its various ways.¹⁹ It is crucial to remember that it is *His* ministry, ever and always, to reveal to us the Father (Matt 11:27). He is God’s final word, *and* He has the final word about God (Heb 1:2).

And this is of course the great thing about true preaching among the people of God in the power of the Holy Spirit—that whoever does the preaching is incidental to the One who is truly preaching: our Lord Jesus Christ.²⁰

We must further notice the office which Christ assumes, which is that of *proclaiming the name*

18. Owen, *Hebrews*, 425.

19. “The Lord Christ, in his own person, by his Spirit in his apostles, by his word, and by all his messengers unto the end of the world, [sets] forth the love, grace, goodness, and mercy of God” (Ibid., 426). “In Scripture reading and sermon, in sacrament and in liturgical action, Christ proclaims God to man” (Nicholls, *Jacob’s Ladder*, 38).

20. Ferguson, “True Spirituality, True Worship.”

of God; and this began to be done when the gospel was first promulgated, and is now done daily by the ministry of pastors.²¹

Christ is the author of the gospel in whatever manner it may be offered to us. And this is what Paul says, for he declares that he and others were ambassadors for Christ; and he exhorted men as it were in the name of Christ (2 Cor. 5:20). And this ought to add no small reverence to the gospel, since we ought not so much to consider men as speaking to us, as Christ by his own mouth.²²

We should not conclude from all the above that the canon is open, that sermons preached and lessons taught add authoritative new revelation from Christ to His Church. Rather, the point is: to the extent that the truth of God is reliably proclaimed and communicated through his servants, it is as a result of the ministry of the living Christ speaking by his Spirit in and through those servants. The truth communicated is God's truth; Christ is the mediator of that truth; and preachers and teachers of the Word are the conduits through which Christ by his Spirit conveys and illuminates that truth. That should certainly affect the attitude with which we preach and teach, *and* the attitude with which we listen!

21. Calvin, *Commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews*, 66.

22. *Ibid.*

Praise (2:12b)

“ . . . in the midst of the congregation I will sing
your praise.”

The Passage

The second half of 2:12 contains the complementary thought that the speaker will also sing the Father’s praise in the assembled congregation. There are ample reasons to see v. 12b as fulfilled by Jesus in the gathering of the church, as we have seen v. 12a also to be: (1) the use of ἐκκλησίᾳ at least suggests that the writer of Hebrews has the assembly of the church in view (in other words, the appearance of this word may not be simply happenstance in a quotation chosen for other reasons); (2) this probability is heightened by the term “brethren” in v. 12a, which is parallel to ἐκκλησίᾳ in 12b—the whole point of the quotation is to demonstrate Christ’s identification with his people, i.e. “those who are sanctified” (v. 11) by his suffering (vv. 9–10), i.e., the church; (3) this view is consistent with the context of the second part of Psalm 22, which sees the victorious sufferer proclaiming and praising God in the company of his brethren.

A couple of questions arise from this interpretation:

TO WHOM IS CHRIST SINGING?

Poythress and others appear to see in Psalm 22:22 (and its quotation in Hebrews 2:12) a *synonymous* parallelism, so that Hebrews 2:12b is saying pretty much the same thing as 2:12a: “Hebrews 2:12 pictures Christ as singing *to the congregation* the account of the eschatological deliverance of God’s chosen One.”²³ In other words, both 12a and 12b

23. Poythress, “Ezra 3,” 85 (emphasis mine). Poythress seems to contradict himself when he later writes: “Christ sings *to* the Lord God *among* the congregation” (Poythress, “Ezra 3 [Concluded],” 222). But

are held to be Christ's communication about God to his people, a downward movement in both instances—Christ proclaiming His name in verse 12a and proclaiming His praiseworthiness in verse 12b.

However, it is better to see in this verse a *synthetic* parallelism, with the two halves regarded as complementary but *in opposite directions*: “I will declare your name to my brethren [downward, God to man], and in the midst of the congregation I will sing Your praise [upward, man to God].” This view is supported by the biblical usage of the verb used in the LXX of Psalm 22:22 and in Hebrews 2:12b, ὑμνέω,²⁴ and its correspondent Hebrew term in Psalm 22:22, הַלְלֵהוּ.²⁵ The consistent usage of both terms is that when they take an object, it is God who is the recipient. Various English translations concur that *God* is the one who is being sung *to* (not just *about*) in Hebrews 2:12 (e.g., KJV, RSV, ESV, NASB, NIV, NLT, RSV).

For these reasons, it is best to interpret the two halves of Hebrews 2:12 as referring to two quite distinct, though marvelously complementary, activities: the declaration of God's praiseworthiness to the people (12a), and the appropriate praise then lifted to God in response (12b).

IS CHRIST LEADING THE PEOPLE'S PRAISE?

Another question concerns the corollary concept, which is assumed though not really defended by a number of com-

in that context he is also dealing with Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, pointing out that singing in those verses is explicitly directed *both* to people and to God.

24. See in the LXX: Judg 16:24; 1 Chr 16:10; 2 Chr 29:30; Isa 12:4,5; 25:1; 42:10; and in the NT: Acts 16:25.

25. See, for example, in the Hebrew Bible: Jdg 16:24; 2 Sam 22:4; 1 Chr 16:4,10; 2 Chr 5:13; Ezra 3:10; Neh 5:13; Ps 18:4; 22:24; 96:4; 150:1–6.

mentators,²⁶ that Jesus' praise of the Father in the midst of the assembly constitutes *leading* His people as well in their praises. This is an indeed an important concept for understanding the Christological dynamic of New Testament worship. While it is not directly stated in Hebrews 2:12, it may be inferred from the following:

1. Already we have considered the probable relevance of the context of Psalm 22:22 in the mind of the writer of Hebrews as he makes his quotation; and indeed much of the second section of Psalm 22 consists of a call by the vindicated one to His brethren to join in with Him in praise to God.²⁷ That includes the very next verse after the one quoted: "You who fear the LORD, praise Him; All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him, And stand in awe of Him, all you descendants of Israel" (22:23). Certainly the one praising God in 22:22 (and the one quoted in Hebrews 2:12) intends to draw others into praise with Him!

2. The immediate reason for the writer of Hebrews to quote Psalm 22:22 (and the following verses from Isaiah 8) is to demonstrate Christ's solidarity with us, His brethren (Hebrews 2:11–13). It is only natural that we should follow our "forerunner" (6:20) and the "author and perfecter of [our] faith" (12:2) as He praises the Father.

26. E.g., Calvin, *Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter*, 27; James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 17, 88–89; Ferguson, "True Spirituality, True Worship."

27. "His . . . response is to say to God that he will offer him praise in that same congregation. Thus, the praise of God that follows is not addressed to God in a vacuum; it is addressed to God through the congregation, with the invitation that they too honor and praise God. The psalmist's invitation to the congregation . . . is taken up in vv. 28–32, where the whole congregation joins in the praise" (Craigie, *Psalms 1–50*, 201).

3. Christ is seen to be the enabler of our worship in Hebrews 7:25: “Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God *through Him*.” προσέρξομαι (“draw near”) is a common LXX word for drawing near to God in worship.²⁸

4. The priesthood of Christ is a major theme in Hebrews; and one crucial activity of a priest is *leading the people in worship*. (See the discussion later of Christ’s similarity to Aaron in the Godward response of worship, in the section “The Two-Way Mediation of Christ,” pp. 48-51 below.)

a) The writer asserts in 8:1–2 our great High Priest “has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,” where He serves as “a minister” (λειτουργός) in the sanctuary and in the true tabernacle.” In the LXX λειτουργέω and its cognates “are used almost exclusively for the service of priests and Levites in the temple.”²⁹ As our connection, our bridge, our “Jacob’s Ladder” between earth and heaven, Christ leads us in praise in our midst and transports us spiritually to the heavenly tabernacle to commune with the Father in Him.³⁰

28. W. Mundle, “Come,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 1:322. Schierse sees our access to God through Christ’s present priestly ministry as foundational to a proper understanding of the entire book of Hebrews: “God’s only-begotten Son and his adopted sons are brothers from all eternity. Underlying these mysterious words, with all that they imply, we catch a glimpse of the basic idea of the whole letter—the faithful as a liturgical community which approaches God’s throne under the leadership of Jesus its high priest” (Schierse, *Hebrews*, 12).

29. K. Hess, “Serve,” *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3:551.

30. Ferguson comments on 8:2: “He has gathered us into a new assembly in which the Lord Jesus Christ is a ‘minister in the holy places. . . .’ Jesus is the λειτουργός, He is the Liturgist, He is the Worship Leader in that heavenly sanctuary; so that when we ‘go to church’ in the power of the Spirit, we go to the church where the

b) It stands to reason that our Priest is the one who must lead us in offering our sacrifice, which is now identified as a “sacrifice of praise” (13:15); and this verse explicitly states that we make that sacrifice “through Him.”

c) Jesus’ role as the “High Priest of our confession” (3:1) is not limited to His past priestly work accomplished in His atoning sacrifice (as we have seen in 2:12a that neither was His role as Apostle/Messenger/Revealer limited to His pre-cross ministry). The writer of Hebrews hints at the past and present aspects of Christ’s priestly work in 2:17 and 2:18 respectively; and he will do so again so later, and with more direct reference to worship, when in turning to make application in 10:19-22 of the great truths he has been expounding in the epistle up until that point, he refers to both Christ’s *past* priestly work in 10:19–20 and his *present* priestly work as our “great priest over the house of God” in 10:21.

d) Furthermore, Hebrews 10:19–25 speaks of our free access into the presence of God through Christ, as well as the importance of our assembling together. Quite likely there is a connection and corporate worship, enabled and led by Christ, is in view.

e) Murray concurs that the continuing priestly ministry of Christ has a Godward trajectory:

It was in pursuance of his priestly office that Christ offered himself a sacrifice to God upon the cross. . . . But that he does not discontinue

Lord Jesus is the minister, where the Lord Jesus is the Leader of His people’s worship. When the author of Hebrews says this, he is picking up one of the strands of what he has already been saying in Hebrews 2 about the kind of ministry that the Lord Jesus has to His people as His people’s High Priest [2:12]—because we have this kind of High Priest, he says, as we engage in worship we are led into presence of God by our Worship Leader, our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ferguson, “True Spirituality, True Worship”).

his priestly office and function is equally patent. . . . His specifically high priestly ministrations are more operative and pervasive in the church upon earth than we are frequently disposed to appreciate. . . . His continued activity has a Godward reference as truly as did his finished priestly offering.³¹

5. In the broader context of the New Testament, we see the clear teaching of our *union with Christ* (1 Cor 1:30; Eph 2:7,10,13; 2 Tim 1:7; 1 Pet 5:14; among many other passages). And being in union with Him, we naturally follow Him as our example, model, substitute, and way to the Father; and so we follow Him into the Father's presence and add our praises to His own. Indeed, Hebrews 2:12b helps to elucidate the fuller meaning of the many scriptural references which state that our worship is *through Christ*.³²

31. Murray, "The Heavenly, Priestly Activity of Christ," 44–47.

32. "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, because your faith is being proclaimed throughout the whole world" (Rom 1:8). "And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation" (Rom 5:11). "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! (Rom 7:25). "To the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen" (Rom 16:27). "For as many as are the promises of God, in Him they are yes; therefore also through Him is our Amen to the glory of God through us" (2 Cor 1:20). "For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father" (Eph 2:18). "Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father" (Col 3:17). "Therefore He is able also to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25). "Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name" (Heb 13:15). "You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet 2:5). "To the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all

It is a natural conclusion that our praises would be in conjunction with, motivated by, empowered by, even led by, Christ's praises "in the midst of the assembly" (Hebrews 2:12b): He enables and empowers His brethren's response to the truth which He has also been the effectual Agent in bringing to them (2:12a). When He sings the Father's praises in the midst of the assembly, He is not singing a solo! Rather He leads us in our praises. When Christ our Model and Brother praises the Father, He leads the way and shows the way for us. Because we are in union with Him, His worship is our worship. We come in and through Him into the Father's presence in worship; we come clothed in His righteousness, and He bears up our weak offerings of worship and makes them one with His own perfect offering of praise. "The real agent in all true worship is Jesus Christ."³³ "Whatever else our worship is, it is our liturgical amen to the worship of Christ."³⁴ He is not an observer—He is the Leader of our worship. While Hebrews 2:12 does not state this explicitly, it is a logical corollary to what 12b says, in the light of the immediate context, the context of Hebrews, and the context of the entire New Testament.

Christ is, in Calvin's words, "the chief Conductor of our hymns!"³⁵ Vaughan writes:

The second clause of the quotation introduces a new particular. *The glorified Saviour is not only the Church's brother, revealing to it the Father; He is also the Church's precentor, leading its wor-*

time and now and forever. Amen" (Jude 25).

33. James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*, 17.

34. *Ibid.*, 14.

35. Calvin, *Hebrews and the First and Second Epistles of St. Peter*, 27.

*ship. So entire is the unity between Christ and His people, as set forth in prophetic Scripture.*³⁶

Worshiped and Worshiper

“A priest not worshipping, is indeed a contradiction. And God hath sworn and will not repent that Jesus is a Priest forever.”³⁷

We can only marvel at the inscrutability of the Incarnation when faced with the fact that this One who is worthy of our worship Himself offers worship to the Father:

Here lies the mystery, the wonder, the glory of
the Gospel, that He who is God, the Creator

36. Vaughan, *Hebrews*, 45 (italics are Vaughan’s). Along those same lines, it is interesting to note that the superscription of Psalm 22 is “to the choirmaster”!

37. Tait, *Meditationes Hebraicae*, 164. This is one of at least three lines of argument against the view of some that the present glorified state of Christ precludes the possibility of Him offering worship to the Father. As Tait points out: (1) *A priest who leads worship must himself be a worshiper*. True and full mediation must certainly include this aspect.

To this may added:

(2) Jesus may continue as a worshiper on account of *His continuing full humanity* (see pages 37–41); in heaven we will likewise be worshipers in our glorified humanity.

(3) *The eternal subordination of the Son to the Father* (1 Cor 3:23; 11:3; 15:24,28; Phil 2:10–11) would seem to allow for a bearing of worship in this relationship, now as during Jesus’ earthly sojourn. (See Korvach and Schemm, “A Defense of the Doctrine of the Eternal Subordination of the Son,” *JETS* 42 [1999]:461–76). It is interesting to note that Sinclair Ferguson suggests that there is a hint of this subordination even in the glorious heavenly scene in Revelation 5; he bases this on the fact that the Father is seen to be sitting on the throne, while the Son is (suggesting a mediatorial position) “standing between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders” (Rev 5:6 ESV) (Ferguson, “The Church’s Worship”).

of all things, and worthy of the worship and praises of all creation, should become man and as a man worship God, and as a man lead us in our worship of God, that we might become the sons of God we are meant to be.³⁸

Christ has not only opened the way into the Father's presence, He not only shows us the way, but He also actively *leads* us in our worship and *leads* us to the throne of God:

And because he is our priest, and because we are invited to receive his priestly ministry for us and to be included in his holy humanity, our worship is a participation in his worship. Christ is the 'minister of the new sanctuary,' the leader of our worship. He proclaims God and praises God 'in the midst of the congregation' (2:12). . . . He calls us to join his voice and to share in his song.³⁹

38. James B. Torrance, "The Place of Jesus Christ in Worship," 351.

39. Cocksworth, *Holy, Holy, Holy*, 159. Likewise Peter Toon: "The church on earth is united in the Holy Spirit with the Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Father, and High Priest in heaven: her worship ascends to the Father within the worship and prayer offered unceasingly by Jesus to the Father" (Toon, *Our Triune God*, 224).