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Ein Prediger muss nicht allein *weden*, also dass er die Schafe unterweise, wie sie rechte Christen sollen sein, sondern auch daneben den Woelfen *wehren*, dass sie die Schafe nicht angreifen und mit falscher Lehre verfuehren und Irrtum einfuehren.

Luther

Es ist kein Ding, das die Leute mehr bei der Kirche behaelt denn die gute Predigt. — *Apologie, Art. 24*

If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? — 1 Cor. 14:3

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ARCHIVES

# The Word Principle in Martin Luther

By CARL WALTER BERNER

Lucid as sunlight are the verses of the Holy Bible which declare that all spiritual life is from the Holy Spirit in the Word. We are *born anew* by the Word; we are *kept* in the faith by the Word; we are *led* to a fruit-bearing life by the Word; we are *armor-plated* against enemy forces by the Word. Simon Peter lifts his voice majestically to say that we are "born again not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever."<sup>1</sup> Earlier in the same chapter he had reminded those who were begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ that they are "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."<sup>2</sup> These verses show that we are brought to faith and kept in faith by the Word of the living God. This is in keeping with the magnificent declaration of our Savior: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."<sup>3</sup> The essence of Christian being is so intimately bound up with God's Word that Jesus categorically lays down the principle: "He that is of God heareth God's words; ye therefore hear them not because ye are not of God."<sup>4</sup> Small wonder, then, that Jesus exhorted His children to faithful continuance in His Word: "If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."<sup>5</sup>

## THE CHURCH A BEARER OF THE WORD

Our Lord, having completed the redemption of our souls, gave to His Church a charter as a teaching institution in the Great Commission: "Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations."<sup>6</sup> The valiant Apostles, especially the noble Paul, went through the land declaring the Word of the living God, confident that the Word of God would build God's kingdom and would win

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Pet. 1:23.

<sup>3</sup> John 5:24.

<sup>5</sup> John 8:31-32.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. 1:5.

<sup>4</sup> John 8:47.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 28:19.

spiritual victories. Throughout Judea, Samaria, and the Mediterranean world, men heard the stirring message of the Gospel, and everywhere the souls of men thrilled to the love of a divine Redeemer through whom they had been restored, forgiven, and clothed with the glory of an eternal life. Armed only with the Word, the Christian forces stormed the very gates of hell. Fire, sword, threat, destruction, death, were hurled against the army of Christ's people, but the Christian army went on conquering and to conquer. Its vanguard was the Sword of the Spirit, the keenest weapon ever drawn.

All the powers of evil were summoned to stay the progress of Christ's Church. The executioner's sword grew dull; the blood of Christians covered the Colosseum of Rome; hungry lions were surfeited with their flesh. But God had given to them a life which was stronger than death, a life which could not be destroyed by fire, sword, persecution, and the grave, a life that was sustained by the divine Word, revealing the power of the Word Incarnate, our Lord Jesus Christ, whose robes of crimson had now become the purple robes of empire and dominion.

Thus the Church of Christ went onward in spiritual conquest until the tragic period of peace and prosperity. No persecution now, but peace; no opposition from the world, but co-operation; no contending for the faith, but a cold conformity. Bible classes were empty; churches were cold; Christians were careless. And so the shadows of the Dark Ages settled over the Church of God. One pillar after another crumbled in the temple of God; one light after another went out because the keepers of the light became unfaithful to their trust. The light of the Cross became dim, and men walked in spiritual darkness. Gradually the doctrine of salvation by faith faded out of sight; Holy Communion was corrupted; the very Church founded on the Bible lost the light of the Bible. No Sword of the Spirit now, no army of the Lord. Christ wept, and devils chuckled as the souls of men were enslaved through superstition and fear.

#### LUTHER'S REFORMATION THROUGH THE WORD

But God's hand was not shortened. In a lonely monastery cell God was preparing a man who, like another John the Baptist, was destined to be a voice in the wilderness bearing

witness to the truth. The Bible had warmed Luther's soul. In the holy Gospel he had discovered the gates of paradise. To his bruised heart and disturbed mind the Holy Spirit had brought the balm of Gilead: "The Gospel of Christ . . . is the power of God unto salvation, to every one that believeth. . . . For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, The just shall live by faith."<sup>7</sup> In this Word, Luther found peace with God. Now he was resolved to bring to others the happiness that made his heart free. Unlike some reformers, Luther saw that the Church had become dark because the light of the Bible had gone out. So he resolved to bring the Bible to the Church. Everywhere the refreshing showers of the Gospel fell upon parched land, and men again thanked God for the precious message of salvation. It was the Word of God that had won the victory. Luther put the Bible into the hands of the people, and the Bible again became a foundation of granite, upon which the Church could rise to new strength. The Reformation of Martin Luther was a Reformation through the Bible.

Having discovered the secret of peace with God through the promises of the Holy Bible, Luther now broke away sharply from the scholastic tradition and introduced a new principle, which was destined to become both the foundation stone of the Reformation and the most distinctive feature of Lutheranism. Until this day the belief that the Kingdom of God can emerge only out of the Word of God is the most distinctive principle in the Lutheran Church.

#### THE WORD MEDIATES GOD TO MAN

Now Luther set forth with a new independence and virility the thesis that God can be known, and man can have communion with God, without mediation through a hierarchy and without sacramental grace in the Roman sense. He held that the Bible as witness to Christ mediates God to man.<sup>8</sup> God reveals Himself as the God of grace through Christ, in whom the world has been declared righteous. Everywhere else, outside of Christ, He appears as the God of the awful metaphysical riddle. Only through contact with Christ does the

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<sup>7</sup> Rom. 1:16-17.

<sup>8</sup> Adolph Saphir, *Christ and the Scriptures* (New York: Gospel Publishing House), p. 11.

soul enter into communion with God. Since, then, this picture of Christ is incarnated in the Bible, which is the work of God, the Bible, or the Word, is the only means by which a personal relationship with God is mediated. It is apparent that this idea excludes every kind of direct mysticism, which aims at union with God apart from Christ and the Word. The Bible with its central message of a pardoning Redeemer forms the center of the Church. This conviction now permeated all of Luther's writings. It directed his approach to the entire religious problem; it pointed out the method for the enlargement of the Kingdom of God. This idea was not merely developed as a counteractive to the Roman Catholic doctrine of the power of the priesthood and of the Mass, but this conviction grew out of his experience, and it was a conviction in which he never wavered.

Luther now no longer regarded grace as a mystical, miraculous substance, imparted through the Sacraments, but as the perfect righteousness of Christ given as a divine gift to all mankind, to be received by all in joyful trust. In the Gospel, which shows the open heart of God, man has the promise of forgiveness. Religion thus steps out of the material, substantial sphere, which in the Catholic sense was merely accompanied by thought and feeling; it enters into the intellectual, psychological, spiritual sphere. It wins man's trust and inspires confidence.

#### THE WORD ALONE IS ABSOLUTE TRUTH

What the priesthood and the laws of the Church meant to Catholicism, the Bible now meant to Protestantism. In the place of the authority of the Church, there now came the authority of the Bible. Luther now regarded the Word, both the spoken Word and the visible Word in Baptism and the Lord's Supper, as an objective and precious endowment intended for the benefit of all mankind. In the Word of the Gospel, God offers and conveys the forgiveness of sins, and the Church lives by the forgiveness of sins.

But if the Church is to be regarded as a divine foundation endowed with absolute truth, secure against all merely human opinion, there must follow the absolute conception of truth, implying unity, unchangeable character, universality,

infallibility.<sup>9</sup> In Catholicism the hierarchy and the Sacraments achieved this absolute conception, and it was from this fundamental impulse that the Catholic Church grew into a world-dominating system which was finally forced to inscribe upon its banners the principle of compulsion. In Protestantism, however, this central fact was the Word of the Scriptures and the Sacraments, which were the sign and seal of the Gospel. Thus the Protestant dogma of the Bible was formulated. The Bible was regarded as the very center of the Church, the absolutely inspired authority, and the operative power of salvation through the converting energy which dwells within it. The Bible manifests its own infallibility by the Holy Spirit who dwells within it. Its meaning is sufficiently clear to enable it to overcome all difficulties arising out of varieties of interpretations. This result was inevitable if the conception of the Church were really to be based upon the Bible, and thus to attain genuine stability. Luther felt that the divine operation must be manifested in something objective, something that God had given, the same for all, something entirely authoritative, definite, standing out in clear relief against all that is merely human. An absolute assurance of this kind could not be based upon the subjective foundation of individual illumination and mystical knowledge — experiences which often cannot be disentangled from the phantasy of the individual. To Luther this objective element, this Gibraltar of divine and absolute truth, was summed up in the divine Word, through which the Church lives because it mediates the living Word.

It was upon this basis that Luther opposed the sectarians with such heat. He frequently felt that they sought the assurance of salvation and the bond of fellowship in their obedience to the Law of God and therefore in a subjective quality. Luther was unwilling to countenance anything that would make the assurance of salvation depend upon a condition in man instead of in God.<sup>10</sup> Faith is a gift of God, not an achievement of man. Grace is a divine quality, operative in the Word and the Sacraments, which produce faith, freely and inwardly without compulsion and apart from external law through the divine energy which dwells in them.

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<sup>9</sup> Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1931), Vol. 2, p. 482.

<sup>10</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 242.

## THE CHURCH EXISTS BY THE WORD

In the interest of this conception of the means of grace Luther laid more and more emphasis on the Sacraments, in which the Word which offers salvation reveals its objective aspect. In this emphasis Luther established the distinctive character of Lutheran theology. Calvinists were content to regard the Sacraments simply as tokens which emphasized the certainty of grace and the spiritual character of the Word. Luther even highly valued the practice of private confession as a means of conveying the objective assurance of absolution through the ministry of the Word. He never forgot his own soul's struggle when for want of an objective and absolute assurance of divine grace he was brought near the brink of despair. And he was determined to preserve for mankind the absolute assurance of salvation, resting entirely in the Word and promise of God, and independent in its essence upon any condition in man. The Church is indissolubly connected with the Word and, as a spiritual body, is independent of the individual personal point of view, being entirely objective. It is this idea of the Word which is at the very core of the Lutheran conception of the Church. This conception was the Protestant equivalent for the Catholic episcopate, with its final centralization in the Papacy.

Lest anyone receive the idea that the Word in Luther's thought is a sort of plaster to be applied to an individual from the outside for his spiritual healing, it should be stated that Luther did not think of the Church as having a mechanical existence in the Word, but as being the holy community, the fellowship, comprising those who have been truly born again by the power of the Word. However, he always held the conviction that those who were born again had become beneficiaries of the new life through the direct influence of the Word. To Luther's mind, the Christian fellowship of Christ-serving and fruit-bearing believers was always only the corollary of the Word which had produced this condition. Since, however, it is impossible in practice to distinguish the converted from the unconverted, the Church could be determined by the Word rather than by the doubtful and uncertain effect of the Word upon specified individuals. For that reason Luther held that where the Word is preached, there is the Church.

The Church is born of the Word. The Church would still exist even if there were nothing left save the Word, for from that source it would ever arise anew. So in the Lutheran view there is an objective holiness which is conveyed by the Word of forgiveness, which overrules all sin and imperfection and brings a consoling and joy-inspiring energy. The soul can enter into this state only through a full personal faith, born of repentance, which alone makes the Christian holy and well-pleasing to God, in spite of his sins and imperfections.<sup>11</sup> This holiness is a purely objective treasure, and as such is absolute, even though it can only be appropriated in the spirit of entire surrender. Thus the Word of the forgiveness of sins remains the agency which creates the Church. This is the magnificent treasure trove which God has placed upon the earth. Thus the Word is the only basis of true ecumenicity, and all who surrender themselves to it in faith are, in spite of unequal achievements and imperfections, members of the Christian fellowship, and there radiates from them the glory of a life and a light which makes them well pleasing in the sight of God. Luther never doubted that the Christian community remaining under the Word would be a holy and God-pleasing group. The sectarians believed that the reality of holiness alone proves the reality of grace. But Luther could never agree with this position. With all his complete inwardness of spirit which finds its life in God, Luther steered clear of fusion with these sectarian principles. He always passionately rejected such ideas. A religion expressing itself chiefly in life and work, instead of joyful trust in God's Word and the resultant assurance of possessing the holiness of Christ as offered in the Gospel, smacked of emphasis on human merit instead of divine grace. Human achievement would come in for too much honor; in fact it would soon become the criterion of grace. Pure grace, appropriated in trust, is not to be bound, limited, judged by practical results. All this would endanger and limit the scope of free grace as the gift of God, which objectively precedes and implies everything else. This relationship has laws of its own, and they cannot be subjected to purely human analysis. Although Luther had a deep conviction of the fallacy of the Roman

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<sup>11</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 501.



system of authoritarianism, he nevertheless preferred the church type of religious organization to the sect type. The Word through which the Holy Spirit reveals and mediates Christ to man, provides the true basis for ecumenicity.

### EFFECT OF THE WORD PRINCIPLE

The Word principle directed an educational program which would bring and keep all ages under the influence of that Word. Spiritual renewal is the result of the divine Word through which the Holy Spirit creates the new life and a personality which shall have the mind of Christ. Such convictions are the very core of Luther's social views.<sup>12</sup> He held that a Christian society is unthinkable without renewed individuals. He propounded the fundamental social principle beyond which our age has not risen, that we cannot permanently solve a single social problem without solving the problem of the human heart.

The Word principle now directed the organizational pattern of the Church in all its details. It now became the duty of all Christians to render the divine Word accessible to everyone, to bring as many as possible under its influence, and, at least in external matters, to do what was necessary to insure the establishment of the supremacy of the Word in order that everywhere the Church may arise out of the Word in spirit and in truth.<sup>13</sup>

### LUTHER WANTED A BIBLE-LOVING CHURCH

Instruction in the divine Word was now regarded the first duty of Christian charity. The public service of worship was given a pedagogical character with a view to the upbuilding of the congregation, including children and youth, by means of a thorough instruction in the Word of God. The spiritual menu for each day in the Lutheran congregations at Wittenberg was rich and its reach embraced all ages. It offered to young and old alike a frequent fellowship with the Word for the purpose of spiritual growth. Each church now became a beehive of activity centering about the divine

<sup>12</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 480.

<sup>13</sup> Karl Holl, *Luther*, "Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte," (Tuebingen: J. C. B. Mohr), Vol. 1, p. 259.

Word. The daily celebration of Mass under the Catholic systems was replaced by a daily service in which the Word of God was set forth in such a manner that it touched the experience point of each age group. For children and young people the church service centered in the teaching of the Catechism and the reading and exposition of the Bible, especially the Gospels and the Epistles. This, for example, was the regular daily church program in Wittenberg: Sundays: three Biblical expositions — one from the Gospels, one from the Epistles, and one from the Old Testament. Mondays and Tuesdays: the exposition of the Catechism. Wednesdays and Saturdays: the exposition of the Gospels. Thursdays and Fridays: the exposition of the Epistles. Participation in these services was not regarded as sufficient to fulfill the requirements of the new Protestant Word principle. This new conviction demanded a form of instruction which touched all hours and areas of life. The Small Catechism set forth the chief parts of Christian doctrine, "as the head of the family should teach them in a simple way to his household." Thus the church, the school, and the home were regarded as areas in which the faithful use of the divine Word should produce a robust Christian faith and all the fruits of the Christian life. The whole expanse of life came thus to be regarded as a school of Christian learning and living because it was all under the influence of the divine Word.

The prominence of the Word came to be distinctive of Lutheran congregations. The Word rose in stately majesty above the mysticism of the Mass and the "experience complex" of the sectarians. It brought a solid, objective, divine principle down into life.

But neither mysticism nor emotionalism is entirely ruled out by the Word principle. Luther left room for tremendous emotional and mystical experiences. He himself could never speak of the divine Law predicated upon the awfulness and mystery of the Godhead without great intensity of feeling. He could never dismiss with a shrug of the shoulders the thought that God in His flaming holiness recoils from sin and pours His wrath upon the sinner. He could never endorse a cold, mechanical process which demanded a moral assent to man's unrighteousness and then obliged him to look around for some deliverance. Mere morality is not the soil from

which grows either the feeling of the awful wrath of God upon sin, or the need of that other unique good which is likewise mystical in character, requiring a redemption and atonement. Later dogmatic theology, to the extent in which it transferred these convictions from their mystical sphere into that of rational ethics, has departed from the spirit of Martin Luther. A cold categorizing of Christian truth was foreign both to his method and his views. In an intensely personal way he felt the pressure of God's wrath upon sin, but he experienced in an almost mystical way the overpowering happiness and peace that comes when God's grace in Christ Jesus is proclaimed to one whose heart has been plowed up by the furrows of the divine Law. For this reason he stated often that the heart of the person who hears the Gospel should leap for joy, that the Christian should stamp and dance and shout aloud, when he hears the glad tidings of the Gospel, which reveals God in His self-disclosure through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Perhaps the Lutheran school has itself not done justice to this numinous or mystic side of the Christian idea of God. By an exclusively moral interpretation it has given to the terms a distorted meaning. The forms of worship were more and more deprived of the genuinely contemplative and the purely devotional elements in them. The conceptual and doctrinal, the rather cold and classical categorization of Christian truths were regarded as the ideals of orthodoxy. Even the inexpressible was driven through the narrow cleft of the understanding.

In the Catholic forms of worship this element of the mystical and numinous continues to predominate, and to form the chief link between the worshiper and the service of worship. Here the sacramental symbolism, the power of legend and miracle, the paradoxes and mysteries of Catholic dogma, the Platonic and neo-Platonic strands woven into the fabric of its religious conceptions, the solemnity of churches and ceremonies, the intimate rapport of Catholic piety with mysticism, above all, the mystic magic of the Mass continue to exert a tremendous spell and charm over the Catholic mind.<sup>14</sup> In the Calvinistic field, the emotional "religious-experience" ethic,

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<sup>14</sup> Rudolph Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (London: Oxford University Press), p. 97.

the sensations and workings of the Holy Spirit upon the heartstrings of the soul, the pious resolution to find the reality of Christian being in the "surrender ideal," the stern self-discipline to achieve perfection in attaining the highest ideals of the divine will — all this has a strong claim upon the emotional responses of the human spirit.

In the Lutheran ethic, the Word, as the very essence of the Kingdom of God, did not preclude emphasis upon the mystic and the emotional. Perhaps we can understand more clearly to what extent we in this our day have yielded the numinous and mystical and emotional elements of the public service by submitting, let us say, the *Mass in B Minor* to the test in this matter. The most mystical portion in Bach's Mass is the "Incarnatus" in the "Credo," and there the effect is due to the faint, whispering, lingering sequence in the fugue structure, dying away to pianissimo. The held breath and the hushed sound of the passage, its weird cadences, sinking away in lessened thirds, its pauses and syncopations, its rise and fall in astonishing semitones, which renders so well the sense of awe-struck wonder — all this serves to express the mysterium by way of intimation.<sup>15</sup> No one can hear these sermons in music without an experience of spiritual thrill in the hidden recesses of the soul.

### RECAPTURING LUTHER'S SPIRIT

It would be ideal if every age could see itself in its own light, take stock of itself, examine carefully the inherited tradition with the view of keeping that which still applies and divesting itself of that which has outworn its usefulness. Lutherans are singularly fortunate that their Reformation produced universals of thought and principle which are as eternal as God's Word. This explains how the Lutheran Church could dedicate itself to a stated creedal position 400 years ago and adhere to that position with virile conviction in this day in spite of all the changes which modern life has brought about. Thankful to Almighty God that the spirit and character of their faith does not stem from the hierarchical absolutism of Rome or from the spiritual legalism of Geneva, but rather from the pure and wholesome fountain of divine truth springing up out of the wellspring of the Holy Bible, Lutherans

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<sup>15</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

should nevertheless be on guard against the evil of the closed mind. Though the basic needs of every age remain unchanged, the new experience areas of individuals in that age demand a new application of old truths.

### PRACTICAL LESSONS FOR OUR DAY

A true interpretation of the Protestant Reformation as applied to the modern setting demands that the children of the Augsburg Confession dedicate themselves to a renewed fidelity to the spiritual heritage of the Reformation. As the Word principle was the most distinctive feature of Luther's theology, that principle must move again to a position of centrality in our theological thinking and our practical church work today. According to this principle, when applied to the Church, we are bound to adopt as a unifying principle in determining the goal of Christian work this thesis: The goal of the Church of Christ on earth, in which all departments of a Christian congregation must share and toward which all units in a congregation must aspire, is to bring preciously redeemed souls under the influence of God's Word, to keep them under the influence of that Word, and through that Word to lead them into a full and faithful expression of God's will. This goal, when applied in a practical way to a parish, will forever remove any cleavage which may exist between one department of the church and another department. If consistently applied, it rules out the insidious and divisive principle which has crept into certain philosophies of church leaders and which calls for a clean-cut distinction between the didactic office of the church through the person of the pastor and through other persons.

If the Word principle is properly understood, there will never again be a problem as to the goal of the Sunday school, of the parish school, and of the congregation as such. There is only one divinely given goal as directed by the Word principle which stands as Lutheranism's most distinctive feature, and that goal is to bring and keep all people from the cradle to the grave under the influence of, in the love of, in the faithful use of, and in a vital obedience to, the living oracles of the divine Word. From a very practical point of view, it is now obvious that a congregation will prosper as a unit in the Kingdom of God in the degree and to the extent that it succeeds

to accomplish this purpose. Every teacher in the Sunday school, every parish school teacher, every worker in the congregation, regardless of position, has the solemn duty directed by this divinely given principle to aim to adopt that one unifying program which achieves this end purpose. Every Christian pastor would do well to review his church membership list with the one question in mind: How many of these people entrusted to my pastoral care are under the influence of God's holy Word in a vital way? How many are faithful in their hearing of God's Word as proclaimed from the pulpit? How many are faithful and true in their relationship to the divine Word in the home? If this principle is regarded as a directive principle which offers a criterion by which the effectiveness of a church program can be measured, then it must be a vital concern of all church workers to apply themselves faithfully to reach this one supreme and divinely given goal. The teacher of a congregation will not be satisfied to bring children under the influence of God's Word through the daily instruction of the parish school and to allow these same children to be abruptly torn from the holy influence of this divine power in adolescent years. Nor will any Christian pastor be satisfied to offer as a menu of the heavenly manna only a single sermon per week with the conviction that it is a sufficient diet for the spiritual health of his members. Every member of the church should be led to a thorough understanding of this distinctive doctrine of God's Word and of Lutheranism. The parish school teacher will be directed by a full understanding of this position to lead the children of the school into such a faithful devotion to God's Word that the study thereof and the love thereof will not terminate with the eighth grade, but will continue through the earthly career of each person. Every Sunday school teacher will have in mind to lead each child to the instruction of confirmation and thereafter to a strong Bible-centered, God-loving life. A true devotion to this fundamental principle in the Kingdom of God will, if applied in a long-range program designed to win the convictions of God's children, remove those divisive features which so often characterize a parish program. If the Word of God unifies us, then we shall be unified indeed. It may require many years of faithful instruction to lead people to a sound conviction with regard to these principles. However, a faithful devotion

to this goal will not be wanting in fruits. An honest analysis of modern parish work leads many a pastor or teacher today to an utter disgust with the demands of a program which has been commonly branded as overorganizationalism. The trouble today is not with organizationalism, but it is with the utter failure on the part of many organizations of the church to adhere to the one principle which characterizes the church's chief and divinely given duty. Any number of organizations in the church are good, provided that all of them will without exception in some way contribute towards the achievement of the one divinely given goal of keeping the entire Christian community under the influence of the holy Word.

And now, what is the conclusion to which the Word principle of Martin Luther urges us? It is this: Let the Word of God have the honor place. Let it be the spiritual lifeblood of every individual, the glory of the home, the treasure of the school, the heartbeat of the church. Let every Lutheran congregation be dedicated to the application of the Word principle in a desperately serious way. Only the Word of God can do the work of God. Let this conviction be written deep in the conscience of every church. Over the portals of our churches let these words be inscribed: "He that is of God heareth God's Words." In the Lutheran sanctuary the altar rightfully occupies no position of greater centrality than the pulpit or the lectern or the font, for it is the divine Word that hallows them all and gives them life and meaning. "He that heareth you heareth Me" — let this golden truth be inscribed on our pulpits. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My Word shall not pass away" — let this divine promise adorn our lecterns. "Now ye are clean through the Word I have spoken unto you" — let this blessed assurance be written above the entrance, so that every worshiper as he leaves the house of God be resolved to fulfill the sacred admonition "Be ye doers of the Word and not hearers only." "O earth, earth, earth, hear the Word of the Lord" — let this be the solemn call to summon our congregations to faithful Bible study. By putting these things into the hearts and minds and consciences of our people we shall restore the sacred Word principle, that blessed heritage of the Reformation, to our homes and churches, and so we shall fulfill the sacred admonition of God "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly."

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