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A Concordance Study of the Concept "Word of God"

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THE concept "Word of God" currently occupies a crucial position in theological discussion. At least two principal reasons are apparent for this situation. Both arise from the fact that the Sacred Scriptures of Old and New Testaments came under the fire of liberal higher criticism. Thereby the significance and content of these writings was called into question, and their reliability as revelation was impugned.

The one concern with the concept "Word of God" arises in reaction to the questioning of the reliability of the revelation. This is the trend of discussion in which theologians of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod have been, for half a century, engaged particularly and which has revolved largely around the question of the inspiration of the Scriptures.

The other is in reaction to the questioning of the significance and meaning of these writings. It has made concessions to the misgivings of liberal criticism as to the reliability of the documents, but has sought to define the core of the Judaeo-Christian theology and has emphasized the basic vitality of its insight into God in Christ. Such labels as "Barthianism" and "neo-orthodoxy" familiarly characterize this movement. Unfortunately for the spectator of these reactions, neo-orthodoxy is in revolt not merely against a liberalist suspicion of the theology of the Scriptures, but against the orthodox defense of the inspired nature of their form. Hence one and the same man becomes tarred with the stick of orthodoxism and obscurantism when he acknowledges the inspiration of Scripture, and of Barthianism and neo-orthodoxy when he maintains the dynamic quality of Christian theology.

This paper proposes, in rather naïve fashion, to make a study which should be preparatory to any discussion of the phrase "Word of God." The naïveté lies in the fact that it confines itself to the

Scriptures themselves and to one concept of the Scriptures, "Word of God." Yet such a study, even if it do no more than to go down a concordance and assemble apparently cognate references, is basic. A theologian of the Missouri Synod assumes, before he begins a study of this sort and afterward, that the Scriptures themselves are the one source of his knowledge of the concept; that the concept must be apparent in clear words of the Scriptures; and that the Scriptures of both Old and New Testaments contribute to a unified picture of the concept.

I. WORD: COMMUNICATION AND POWERFUL FACT

A concordance study operates by a simple review of every instance of a phrase. That review involves contributions of lexicon and grammar. It extends beyond the individual phrase to scrutinize the entire context of each usage of the term. The study will thereupon repeat the initial review, this time seeking to discern parallels and contrasts of usage and seeking to set up categories, if any. This paper attempts, in the interest of brevity and conciseness, to merge these two processes.

Obviously the danger in a complete concordance study lies in the second stage, the establishing of categories. The danger lies in framing categories of usage which are too fixed or few; and in inserting usages of the term into categories which are preconceived.

Many a reader of the Bible approaches the term "Word of God" with such a preconceived category, i.e., "Word of God" = Bible itself. He need not discard that category, but he must beware of making it the sole definition of the term. Even a lexicographical review of the most abundant terms translated "Word of God," namely, *dabar* in the Old Testament and *rhema* and *logos* in the New Testament, indicates the hazard in such an oversimplification; for these words denote not merely "word," but "thing," "fact," as well; not merely *verbum*, but *res*.

A review of all instances produces two major categories of emphasis. The term involves the idea of active purpose, the working out of a design and intention; thus the term is synonymous with force, activity. The term likewise involves the idea of communication; the force, purpose, and activity is being registered toward people, made apparent in them or to them. It seems questionable

whether there is any instance of the term in which either of these categories of meaning is totally absent. Yet the usages of the term can be classified, according to their context, as to the freighting of meaning which is predominant at any given time in them: activity, or communication; force, or revelation.

The uniqueness of the term "Word of God" is traceable to the fact that it operates with semantics more characteristic of Hebrew than of Greek. Thus "name of God" means more than a designation of God, namely, God Himself as He is named and understood. "Word of God" means not merely sayings of God, but God Himself as He acts and as He unfolds Himself and His actions to human beings.

Noteworthy is Martin Luther's insight into this dual freighting of the concept "Word of God." Thus on 1 Pet. 1:23 (EA 51, p. 377, from 1523): "It is a divine power, yes, it is God Himself."

II. WORD: OLD TESTAMENT

A. Some terms translated "Word of God" in the Old Testament in themselves accentuate communication. Thus *'emer* or *'omer*, speech or saying; *mi'mar*, Dan. 4:17; *millah* (common in Job; however, frequently with the inference of power); *'emer* (Job 6:10, the only reference to God); *'imrah*, a precept that can be reviewed and pondered (Ps. 119:11, 50, 103, 133, 148); *peh*, mouth and hence words (Num. 20:24; 22:18; 36:5; Deut. 34:5); *dabar*, particularly when in the plural, of words set down (Ex. 4:28; 20:1; 34:1, 27, 28; Num. 11:24; 15:31; Deut. 6:6; 10:2; in Deuteronomy frequently of the word of the covenant, 27:3 *et al.*; Joshua 14:10).

B. Most frequently "Word of the Lord" in the Old Testament implies the active purpose and working out of design, for which a verbal description or spoken word, or an event, an act, is simply the surface signal and summary. This meaning is predominant in *'imrah* in Ps. 18:30; 119:41, 50, 58, 82, 116, 170. Early cases with *dabar* are Gen. 15:1, 4; Num. 15:31; Joshua 8:27. Beginning with 1 Samuel, this usage of *dabar* is very abundant (Jeremiah and Ezekiel alone have over 200 instances), and some are noted in the following paragraphs.

1. The Word of God is described as exerting power upon or through actual events in history. It is equated with the work of God:

For the word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done in truth. Ps. 33:4. Cf. Ps. 106:12, 13.

In God will I praise His word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto Me. Ps. 56:4 (cf. 10).

The angels are described as moving at the Word of God:

Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word. Ps. 103:20.

The great work of God is creation.

By the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth. Ps. 33:6 (a review follows of creation and the work of God in history).

Forever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven. Thy faithfulness is unto all generations; Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. They continue this day according to Thine ordinances; for all are Thy servants. Ps. 119:89-91.

It is the word of God which preserves the world in its course:

He sendeth forth His commandment upon earth; His word runneth very swiftly. He giveth snow like wool; He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. He casteth forth His ice like morsels; who can stand before His cold? He sendeth out His word and melteth them; He causeth His wind to blow, and the waters flow. He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. Ps. 147:15-19.

The historical books are crowded with individual instances of the Word of God acting in the affairs of individuals and of nations; frequently the expressed message of a prophet or another individual with insight is there to interpret and predict or describe this Word or action. Such words of God are the directing of Samuel into His service, 1 Sam. 1:23; the determining of the succession of kings of Israel, e.g., 2 Kings 15:12; special provision for believers, 1 Kings 17:16 (Elijah); 2 Kings 4:44; 7:1, 16; help for believers at special occasions, Ps. 105:19 (Joseph); 107:20 (Israel); 119:114 ff. (the believer); Jer. 29:10; 34:5; 39:16 (special promises); trials upon the unfaithful, Is. 9:8; 24:3; Jer. 21:11; 44:26, 29; Ezek. 12:25; Zeph. 2:5; Ps. 105:28 (the miracles in Egypt).

Note the usage in 1 Kings 22:5 (cf. 2 Kings 1:16), prophets enquiring what the action of the Lord will be; Ezra 9:4, judgment in view of transgression.

2. The Word of God is shown as effective in the fact that He keeps His promises; hence His fulfilling of His plans is a continuing Word and action also to subsequent generations. Thus creation and preservation involve promises that come true:

I am the Lord, thy God, that divided the sea, whose waves roared; the Lord of Hosts is His name. And I have put My words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of Mine hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth and say unto Zion, Thou art My people (Is. 51:15-16; spoken to those who should be stirred by His promises).

The discerning believer reacts thus to all of the promises of God:

Thou hast dealt well with Thy servant, O Lord, according unto Thy word. Teach me good judgment and knowledge; for I have believed Thy commandments. Before I was afflicted, I went astray; but now have I kept Thy word (Ps. 119:65-67).

The historical books describe individual promises working themselves out in history and thus strengthening believers: 1 Kings 8:20, 56 (2 Chron. 6:10, 17), Solomon building the Temple; 1 Kings 17:24, Elijah healing; 2 Kings 19:21 (Is. 37:22), God's help against Sennacherib; 2 Kings 20:4, 19, subsequent help to Hezekiah; 1 Chron. 22:8, David not to build the Temple; 2 Chron. 12:7, Rehoboam's humbling. Frequently the covenant with Israel is described as a promise with ongoing results, e. g., Ps. 105:8. The promises of the new covenant of grace and mercy are described as Word of God:

Many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths; for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. . . . O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord. Is. 2:3, 5.

Let the wicked forsake his way and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My

ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow, from heaven and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth; it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. For ye shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace. The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. Is. 55:7-13.

3. The Word of God is described as making impelling demands. Sometimes these demands are described as producing a change of heart and mind in those to whom the Word comes. This goal of the Word is described in Isaiah:

Thus said the Lord, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool. Where is the house that ye build unto Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things hath Mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit and trembleth at My word. 66:1-2.

Individual incidents are recorded where the Word of God led to a fundamental pattern of behavior: 2 Sam. 7:4, David and the Temple project; 1 Kings 12:22, 24 (2 Chron. 11:2-4), Rehoboam; 1 Kings 18:36, Elijah and the prophets of Baal; 1 Chron. 11:3, David anointed; 2 Chron. 30:12, the efforts of Hezekiah to train Judah:

Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the Lord.

Ps. 119 is rich in its descriptions of the effect of the Word of God on the heart: to help overcome sin, 11, 101, 105; to have the life of God, 17, 25, 159, 160 (cf. Ezek. 37:4); good cheer, 28, 74 (cf. Jer. 15:16); courage, 161, 162 (Ps. 130:5); understanding, 169.

4. God rejects men because of their rejection of His Word, which evoked a collision with active resistance. Outstanding is the judgment upon Saul. Samuel tells him:

For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king. And Saul said unto Samuel: I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words, because I feared the people and obeyed their voice. Now therefore, I pray thee, pardon my sin, and turn again with me, that I may worship the Lord. And Samuel said unto Saul: I will not return with thee; for thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, and the Lord hath rejected thee from being king over Israel. 1 Sam. 15:23-26; cf. 1 Chron. 10:13.

Similar rejections: 1 Kings 2:27 (house of Eli); 16:7 (Baasha); 2 Chron. 10:15 (against Rehoboam; note "word which He spake by the hand of Ahijah"); Ps. 106:24-27 (Israel in the wilderness):

Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not His word; but murmured in their tents and hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord. Therefore He lifted up His hand against them to overthrow them in the wilderness, to overthrow their seed also among the nations and to scatter them in the lands.

Is. 1:10 (against Judah); 28:7-18 (against the people of God who would not hear):

But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little; that they might go and fall backward and be broken and snared and taken. V. 13.

Is. 30:12-15 (against Israel for trusting in Egypt):

Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel: Because ye despise this word and trust in oppression and perverseness and stay thereon, therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant. And He shall break it as the breaking of the potters' vessel that is broken in pieces; He shall not spare; so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth or to take water withal out of the pit. For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength; and ye would not.

Jer. 17:15 (against Judah); 21:1-6 (against Zedekiah); Zech. 1:6 (against the fathers).

5. Frequently the Word of God is described as having its effect in connection with a word actually spoken. In the days of Eli such words were scarce:

And the word of the Lord was precious in those days; there was no open vision. 1 Sam. 3:1.

1 Sam. 9:27; 10:1 ff. (Samuel anoints Saul); 1 Kings 2:4 (David quoting a promise); 8:26 (Solomon remembering words); 18:31 (Elijah quoting a promise); 2 Kings 20:19 (Hezekiah quoting Isaiah); 2 Chron. 36:21, 22 (prophecies of Jeremiah); Jer. 32:6-8 (Jeremiah delivers a message given him by the Lord); Ezra 1:1 (referring to a word spoken by Jeremiah); Amos 8:11-12:

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord; and they shall wander from sea to sea and from the north even to the east; they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord and shall not find it.

This is not to imply that these sections treat of spoken communication to the exclusion of the activity of God. In many of the sections of Scripture cited in preceding paragraphs the Word of the Lord is accompanied or interpreted by express verbalization. In every instance the Word of the Lord is not merely power, but the communication that it is God who is active.

6. When the Word of God came to a man, how did he perceive it? When the Word of God was to be proclaimed by a human agent, how did he get it first? It is noteworthy that the Scriptures make no attempt to describe the process of inner recognition of the Word. There was an intuition, perhaps outlined or defined with an inner vision; but in all instances the Word itself was the source of that recognition. 1 Sam. 3:1 speaks directly of "vision." Samuel, 1 Sam. 9:27, repeated words which God had spoken "in his ear," v. 15. Solomon, 1 Kings 8:26, remembers words which his father had spoken, 1 Kings 2:3, which in turn had been "revealed" to him. The phrase 1 Kings 18:31 harks back to the saying of the angel Gen. 32:28. 1 Sam. 3:21 speaks of the Lord's "revealing Himself by the word." A seer was a person who received such a word by

intuition, cf. 2 Sam. 24:11; 2 Kings 3:12; 1 Kings 13:9, 18 (angel); 17:2, 8, etc.; 22:19; 1 Chron. 25:5; Is. 2:1; Jer. 23:28:

The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the Lord. (Note v.29.)

Jer. 27:18.

7. In certain instances the Word of God is described as being recorded in writing. Sometimes the record is stated as conveying "the words of God," which may signify not simply that more than one word of communication is involved, but that there are a number of activities of God toward men to be chronicled.

The word, or plan, which God had for Israel and communicated by Elijah was spoken of also later, 2 Kings 9:36; every bit of it should come true, 2 Kings 10:10; similarly the promise to Jehu, 2 Kings 15:11-12. 2 Kings 22:16-20 describes the word which God would carry out toward Israel as the word which was already written against idolatry in the Law of God read under Josiah; 2 Chron. 34:21 says of this:

Go, enquire of the Lord for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the Book that is found; for great is the wrath of the Lord that is poured out upon us because our fathers have not kept the word of the Lord to do after all that is written in this book.

Similarly the coming to pass of words before spoken by Jeremiah:

I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nation. Jer. 25:13.

The Word of the Lord came to Jeremiah that he should write words concerning the future of Judah into a book, Jer. 30:1-3. The written words have a value as a standard against those who purport to have the word of God and have it not (Is. 8:19-20):

When they shall say unto you: Seek unto them that have familiar spirits and unto wizards that peep and that mutter, should not a people seek unto their God? for the living to the dead? To the Law and to the Testimony! If they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.

Evil was the situation when men allowed the significance of the

written Word to fritter away, Is. 28:10, 11, 13. The Word of God can perpetuate its force from generation to generation (Is. 59:21):

As for Me, this is My covenant with them, saith the Lord: My Spirit that is upon thee and My words which I have put in thy mouth shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever.

In Neh. 8:9, 13, however, the Word which the people heard in the reading of the law is called "words of the Law."

III. WORD: NEW TESTAMENT

In the New Testament two words are translated "word," *rhema* and *logos*.

A. Of simple communication by means of a word, *rhema* seems to be used John 8:47, "He that is of God heareth God's words," yet the ingredient of effective power may not be lacking even there. Acts 10:36 the "word which God sent," is the word of preaching which was published throughout the Holy Land.

Logos in the sense of communication is used particularly in the plural, and in that form not found referring specifically to words of God.

B. Both terms are used in numerous instances to denote an active working of God which may or may not be accompanied by verbal interpretation and announcement.

1. *Rhema* is used Matt. 4:4 (quoting Deut. 8:3), Luke 2:29 (the Nunc Dimittis is crowded with Old Testament phraseology), Luke 3:2 (the sending of John the Baptist), John 3:34, John the Baptist about Christ:

For He whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God; for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him; the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand.

John 14:10, Jesus of God active in Him:

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak unto you I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.

Rom. 10:17, of God's sending of preachers:

So, then, faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

Eph. 6:17:

Take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Heb. 6:4-5:

It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come. . . .

Heb. 11:3:

Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

1 Pet. 1:25:

The word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you.

Rev. 17:17, ". . . until the words of God shall be fulfilled."

2. The word *logos* is used of the Word of God in a most unique sense, John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:1; Rev. 19:13, to describe God Himself made manifest in the incarnate Son of God and carrying out the designs of God in creation, redemption, and the judgment of the world. In this usage of the term the accent is almost entirely on the sheer force and power of God's design actuating itself toward man, the interpretation thereof being not so much by words of speech as by the Person Himself (cf. John 14:10 above). It is possible to construe also other phrases "Word of God" to denote the incarnate Logos, Jesus Christ; the above are unquestionably so used.

3. The word *logos* is used, without specific reference to Jesus Christ, to describe the active energy and power of God at work: Matt. 13:19-21, the word of the Kingdom (in Luke 8:11 called directly the word of God); Mark 7:13, Pharisees making "the word of God of none effect through your tradition"; Luke 11:28:

Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it.

John 17:6, 14, 17 ("Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy word is truth"); Acts 4:29-31:

Now, Lord, behold their threatenings, and grant unto Thy servants

that with all boldness they may speak Thy word, by stretching forth Thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of Thy holy Child Jesus . . . and they spake the word of God with boldness.

Acts 6:7 (cf. Acts 12:24; 19:20):

The word of God increased, and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly. . . .

Acts 10:36:

The word (*logos*), which God sent unto the Children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all), that word . . . (*rhema*) ye know.

Acts 11:1, Gentiles also receiving the word of God; 13:5, "they preached the word of God in the synagogues"; 13:44, 46, 49, the published word of God; 13:48, "They glorified the word of the Lord"; 20:32, Paul to the elders of Ephesus:

I commend you to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Rom. 9:6, the effect of the word of God; 1 Cor. 14:36:

What, came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only?

2 Cor. 2:17; 4:2, corrupting the word of God by insincerity; Col. 1:25, fulfilling the word of God; 1 Thess. 2:13:

For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.

1 Tim. 4:5, sanctifying the creature by the word of God and prayer;

2 Tim. 2:9, "The word of God is not bound"; Titus 1:3:

God hath in due times manifested His word through preaching, which is committed unto me according to the commandment of God, our Savior.

Titus 2:5, women pure "that the word of God be not blasphemed"; Heb. 4:12:

For the word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the

thoughts and intents of the heart; neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight, but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.

Heb. 7:28:

The Law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the Law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated forevermore.

Heb. 13:7, those who speak the word of God to the congregations;

1 Pet. 1:23, "the incorruptible seed, the word of God"; 2 Pet.

3:5, 7, the creating and preserving word of God; 1 John 1:10:

If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

1 John 2:5:

Whoso keepeth His word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.

1 John 2:14:

I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

Rev. 1:2:

John, who bare record of the word of God and of the testimony of Jesus Christ and of all things that he saw (cf. v. 9).

Rev. 3:8:

Thou hast a little strength and hast kept My word and hast not denied My name.

Rev. 6:9:

I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held (cf. 20:4).

C. Pertinent is the significance of the term "word" as related to Jesus Christ. The same loadings of meaning seem to apply.

1. *Rhema* is used of Jesus to denote predominantly communication: Matt. 26:75; 27:14; Luke 24:8; John 8:20. *Logos*, Luke 4:22; 22:61; 24:44; John 2:22; 14:24.

2. With significance chiefly of power and activity to denote Jesus at work accomplishing the ends which He intended, *rhema* is used John 6:63:

It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life.

V. 68: "Thou hast words of eternal life"; 12:48:

He that rejecteth Me and receiveth not My words hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the Last Day (cf. ff.).

15:7:

If ye abide in Me and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it will be done unto you.

17:8:

I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.

Heb. 1:3:

Being the Brightness of His glory and the express Image of His Person and upholding all things by the word of his power. . . .

2. Similarly used is *logos* Matt. 8:16, casting out demons; 24:35, His words are everlasting; Mark 2:2, preaching the Word; Luke 4:32:

They were astonished at His doctrine; for His word was with power.

John 4:41, 50; 5:24, believing because of His Word; 5:38:

Ye have not His word abiding in you; for whom He hath sent, Him ye believe not.

John 8:31, 32:

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.

John 8:43:

Why do ye not understand My speech? Even because ye cannot hear My word.

Acts 15:35-36; 16:32: Preaching the word of the Lord; Col. 3:16, word of Christ dwelling richly in Christians; 1 Thess. 1:8, word of the Lord sounding out; 4:15, prediction by a power of prophecy; 2 Thess. 3:1, word of the Lord having free course.

D. A unique variant of the concept "word of God" is the term "word" used to denote the powerful proclamation of the Gospel,

without the designation "of God" or "of Christ"; however, frequently with adjectives denoting factual content or power. Hence this usage explicitly stresses both segments of the concept, communication and redeeming power. Thus Mark 2:2; 16:20, "the Lord confirming the Word with signs following"; Acts 4:4; 6:4 (identified with Word of God, v. 2); 8:4 (identified with "preach Christ," v. 5); 8:25, Gospel; 10:44; 11:19; 12:26, "of this salvation"; 14:25; 15:7, "of the Gospel"; 17:11; Rom. 10:8, "of faith"; Gal. 6:6; Eph. 1:13, "of truth"; 5:26, "washing of water by the word"; Phil. 1:14; 2:16, "of life"; Col. 1:5, "of the truth of the Gospel"; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2 Thess. 3:1; 1 Tim. 4:6, "words of faith and of good doctrine"; 5:17; 2 Tim. 2:15, "of truth"; 4:2; Titus 1:9, "faithful word"; Heb. 4:2; 5:13, "of righteousness"; James 1:18, "of truth," 21, 22; 1 Pet. 2:8; 3:1; 2 Pet. 1:19, "of prophecy"; 1 John 2:7. Amid this welter of pat phrase St. Paul gives the reminder, 1 Cor. 4:20:

For the Kingdom of God is not in word, but in power (cf. 1 Thess. 1:5: Our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance).

IV. WORD AND SCRIPTURE

A final inquiry concerns the relation, according to the usage of Scripture itself, of the Sacred Scriptures to the Word of God.

A. There appears to be only one instance in which the phrase "word of God" is linked directly to the Scriptures; John 10:33 ff.:

The Jews answered Him, saying: For a good work we stone Thee not, but for blasphemy, and because Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God. Jesus answered them: Is it not written in your Law, I said, Ye are gods? If He called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken, say ye of Him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God? If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not.

B. By inference a number of passages of Scripture seem to assert that the Scriptures are the Word of God, even though the phrase itself is not used. 2 Tim. 3:16 indicates that St. Paul regarded the Sacred Scriptures of the Old Testament as having come into being through an act of the Spirit of God; they are words, and hence

may be denoted "words of God" and the act of giving them a "word of God." He likewise asserted of his own preaching (although he does not specifically assert this of his writings) that his publishing of the revelation of God concerning Christ is in words "which the Holy Ghost teacheth," 1 Cor. 2:13; and in 2 Thess. 2:15 he coordinates his spoken words and his epistles as agencies by which Christians had been taught. Cp. 1 Cor. 14:37. 2 Pet. 1:19-21: the power of the Spirit originally animating the Prophets, whose words are now recorded in Scripture, now has its counterpart in the New Testament Gospel proclamation of the Apostles, to the end that men might come to faith in Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus told the Jews that the Scriptures testified of Him, John 5:39. St. John speaks with assurance of "the record" that "God gave of His Son," 1 John 5:10, 11, and sets his own record into the same program of giving life to men, v. 13; cf. John 20:31.

C. In order to fill out even an elementary picture of what the Scriptures themselves have to say about the manner in which God achieves His ends in human intellect and life, a number of further concordance studies are essential. Several of these involve terms used even more frequently than "word of God."

1. In the field of revelation, where western minds are so easily inhibited by concern for information and factuality, the Biblical terms for "know," "knowledge," "wisdom," "truth," "doctrine," need especial refreshment.

2. The very common phrase "God said" needs to be reviewed in its every context.

3. As primary a concept as "name of God," "name of Jesus," needs review, since it involves the structure of God's dealing with man and not simply vocabulary.

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