

According to Bultmann, "there is one estimate of [Jesus'] person that corresponds to his own intention—not, however, insofar as he is a 'personality,' but insofar as he is bearer of the word" (*Jesus*: 181). But what, exactly, does Bultmann understand by someone's being "bearer of the word [*Träger des Wortes*]?"

The more I have thought about it, the clearer it has seemed to me that he understands it in such a way that there is a genuine analogy between someone's being bearer of the word and something's being the element(s) of a sacrament. Therefore, while he is clear that, according to the early tradition, the significance of Jesus' person was seen in his words (cf. Mk 8:38), and that it was on the basis of the authority of his words that the earliest community confessed him to be the Messiah, it is nevertheless Jesus himself, not his words, who is the bearer of the word. In other words, what is decisive is not the "*what*" of Jesus' words, but their "*that*," their occurrence as event, as the event of God's forgiveness. "Thus Jesus is bearer of the word, and it is in the word that he assures persons of the forgiveness of God. . . . There is no possibility other than the word for the forgiveness of God to become a reality. It is in the word and not otherwise that Jesus brings forgiveness. Whether his word is truth, whether he is sent from God—this is the decision with which the hearer is confronted; and his saying remains, 'Blessed is the one who takes no offense at me!'" (181 f.).

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