

# Chancellor Hans Luther, Address to the Stockholm Conference for Practiced Christianity (August 1925)

## Abstract

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In this recording, German Chancellor Hans Luther conveyed his good wishes to the organizers and participants at the 1925 World Conference of Life and Work, which the Swedish archbishop Nathan Söderblom had organized in Stockholm in an attempt to bring all of the Christian churches together in a single ecumenical council. Although Luther, an independent, had profiled himself as an economic and financial expert and rarely delved publicly into religious matters, this conference's aim doubtless appealed to him and many other German politicians, who knew only too well how deep the country's denominational divisions often ran. Under the slogan "Doctrine divides, while service unites," the conference addressed contemporary social and moral problems and sought to promote co-operation between the various Christian faiths. The Catholic Church refused to attend at all, however, and even the participating churches could not avoid arguing over their theological differences. This 1925 attempt at ecumenism did bear some fruit later on, as it helped paved the way for the establishment of the World Council of Churches in 1948.

## Source

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All social action that is based on religion has the unshakable firm foundation that every human being appears as a vessel of eternal values. With such an attitude, universal love for humanity is not something that one can or cannot have; for such religious contemplation, service for the good of all humanity is only one way of serving God.

There is another sense in which an inner necessity of religious life arises from the economic organization of the present. Especially for people today, the worker, who is only one link in an economic chain of labor that is incomprehensible to him, is like a parable of our entire spiritual situation.

The progress in knowledge of nature and economics has infinitely widened our view into all the depths of current events. But the broader our view has become, the less we see beginning and end and the less we have formulas for the meaning of events that satisfy us inwardly.

Thus we have all become more and more lonely, even those to whom the treasures of knowledge and research are available, despite all the progress of human intellectual work. The psychological break with the past of cultural life also gapes ever wider. The tremendous search for new expression in all fields of modern art is convincing proof of this.

Reality accessible to our senses in its entirety as it surrounds us, in space and time, has lost its solidity. But man cannot root himself in all these relativities alone, but needs a rootstock in the absolute. Here, too, only religion can help, which, precisely through the feeling of complete dependence, frees us from the vicissitudes of life.

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