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Luther on Faith

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THE Lutheran Reformation unleashed religious subjectivism and was a precursor of the egocentricity of the modern age.

A Roman Catholic theologian who is perhaps the most eminent living dogmatician of his communion makes this claim. Michael Schmaus in his *Katholische Dogmatik* (Vol. 4, Part 1, 1952) holds that the type of faith which Luther expressed and propagated disregards all religious authority which is not centered in the direct approach of the soul to God. The burden of Schmaus's criticism, as ably pointed out by the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* (1955, column 104), is that according to Luther and Calvin—note the juxtaposition which at other places is extended to include modern liberalism—justification is attributed “not to the sacraments, but to faith in the sacraments” (Schmaus, p. 33). He suggests that the whole non-Roman camp, including the Lutherans, regards faith not simply as an acceptance of what the means of grace offer but as the active cause of salvation and also the ultimate determinant of truth. Rome's dominantly subjective *gratia infusa* concept prevents the learned prelate from recognizing the objective nature of God's promise for Christ's sake in Word and Sacrament, as it is confessed in Article V of the Augsburg Confession. At the same time his predilection for the Roman brand of historical collective objectivism obscures from his vision the fundamental difference between the Lutheran *Gnadenmittel* approach and “immediate grace” of Calvinism and Enthusiasm.

Schmaus's failure to make these careful distinctions is altogether typical of the Roman method. Very recently Joseph Lortz, the famous Roman Catholic historian of the Reformation period, offered the same unbalanced criticism in a widely heralded lecture.¹

¹ For a general orientation see the author's article: “Streiflichter auf Subjektivismus und subjektivistische Lutherdeutung” in *Lutherischer Rundblick*, No. 9/10, 1953, pp. 2 ff., Lutheraner-Verlag. He also has presented the source material from Luther with an added excerpt from Otto Ritschl's *Dogmengeschichte des Protestantismus* (Vol. I, Leipzig, 1908) in multigraphed form under the title of *Luthers Stellung zur Heiligen Schrift* (Teil I), which can be secured for 50 cents from Lutheraner-Verlag, Uelzen, Hannover, Postfach 176.

In this article we purpose to illustrate and discuss the Roman conception of Luther's faith on the basis of another presentation, which appeared in *Stimmen der Zeit* (Munich), a well-known Jesuit periodical. The April 1953 issue carried a discussion entitled "Conscience and Certainty," in which Father Oskar Simmel, S. J., attempts an analysis of the problem of personal experience and certainty as it presents itself in Roman Catholicism and in Lutheranism. In this study he speaks also about Luther himself (pp. 50 ff.):

Luther endured in all its depth the suffering caused by this problem. As a young man and also later he experienced to the point of despair the fears and pains of conscience. His "Resolutions," written in 1518, reproduce vividly the torture of these inner conflicts. WA 1, 557: "Strangely enough, in this moment the soul cannot believe it can ever be saved; it feels only that the measure of punishment is not yet full. . . . Thus the soul, when the eternal inundation comes, feels and drinks nothing but eternal pain; this, however, does not remain, but passes. It is a hellish torture, that unbearable horror which cuts off all comfort." About the same time, 1521, Ignatius of Loyola experienced similar struggles. For both of them the question of how they would find a merciful God was not a purely speculative matter but an experience which moved them to the depths of their terror-stricken souls.

But by going another way than Ignatius and the pious Christians of the past, Luther rent asunder Christendom to this day. The certainty of faith, he probably thought, would remain untouched by the temptations of the world only if it were experienced in the same measure, indeed, more strongly and more forcefully than by them. And did not this experience exist as a matter of fact? Had not the Gospel from the time of its entrance into the world proved itself to countless people as glad tidings of that inner peace of which the Christian cannot be robbed through any external distress? Since it first resounded, that high song of joy, the Magnificat, has never been silenced. These inner experiences were known. The rules according to which they are to be judged were familiar to the oldest teachers of spiritual life, the monks of Thebais. And the theologians believed these experiences to be evidence that a person possessed grace. However, already the New Testament warns also against this idea. "Believe not every

spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God" (1 John 4:1). It is precisely these inner experiences that are only too easily subject to the confusions and errors of the human mind. If they are of God, it would be possible to judge them by the doctrine of Christ as proclaimed. An inner experience which was not in harmony with that doctrine is not of God. There is, then, in Christendom a fully developed understanding of these experiences. German mysticism, the *devotio moderna* of northern Germany, had knowledge of them and operated with them, but so also does the church in her liturgical prayer.

It was not a new thing, then, that Luther had these inner experiences and thereby influenced the piety of wider circles. Rather what was new was the slant which he gave them. According to him, faith without experience is impossible. "This [the forgiveness of sins through the grace of Christ] you must feel and confess in your heart; if you do not feel it, do not think that you have faith" (WA 10-III, 261). What is felt in inner experience is certain. That alone is the faith which God gives by pure grace. But thereby inner experience was made the only and determining criterion of truth. Over against this fact, Luther's speaking of Scripture as the only norm of faith was of little consequence. Scripture could at best only offer the subject matter by which experience was ignited. At best it was an antecedent norm. The final decision was left to man's inner self. What he experienced within himself was saving faith. In this sense Luther's religion is exclusively a religion of conscience.

These words from the pen of a keen Roman Catholic theologian sound very odd for two reasons. On the one hand, the question arises how a Roman Catholic can risk speaking of a definitive certainty of truth or of salvation when such a certainty has been declared impossible, has even been anathematized in the Roman dogmas which are to this day binding upon all Roman Catholics (Cf. *Trident*, Sess. 6, Can. 9, 13, and 16).

On the other hand, one must be more than surprised at the fact that here Luther, who is the enemy of *Schwärmerei* and pre-eminently the theologian of objective certainty, is indirectly placed on the same level with that Neo-Protestantism which has set up a subjective decision in man, determined by emotion or experience, as the decisive theological principle of cognition and certainty, or uncertainty, respectively. More than that, Luther is made responsible

for the disintegration of Christian faith which this new anthropocentric Protestantism has produced.

It is indeed basically correct to say that to Luther Christianity is a most personal encounter with God, a meeting with God in person, a "being rooted in God." To him there could be no Christianity which is not experienced by the heart. According to him, the Christian not only once, in the hour of conversion, but again and again suffers the painful feeling of his ungodly self being crushed before God and His holy Law. But then he, the despicable man of sin, also tastes in his heart again and again the unspeakably comforting divine acquittal, the forgiveness in God's everlasting mercy of each and every sin, the precious pardon which the Son of God by His *satisfactio vicaria* has merited also for him, the utterly unworthy. Of this inner experience Luther was divinely certain. Luther's paradoxically double experience of God's Law and of His Gospel was, by and large, something quite different from the German *devotio moderna* before him, as it was from Loyola's after him. And Neo-Protestantism is not a descendant of Luther but of the secularization that sprang up 200 years later. The Reformer's new discovery of the old way was possible precisely because he did not seek basic religious experience in himself, within the area of self-help, or with the aid of even a partial human co-operation or of an "inner light." He never regarded his vital experience as one to be elicited or ignited even in the slightest degree, through human "reason or strength." For Luther the first and last cause, the very basis and the entire support of the whole Christian being, was to be found not in man but in something completely outside of man's personal experience: in the objective revelation of God in Christ, in the Word which freely gives us Christ's righteousness and makes it our own.

Luther did not follow mysticism in cherishing and cultivating "the absolute innermost self." For him every inner prop had broken down. He confessed:

Free will against God's judgment fought,
Dead to all good remaining.

He saw help nowhere but in Christ. Salvation in time and in eternity existed for him only in the *τετέλεσται*, the great "It is finished," only in the cross and the empty tomb. He found the

only possible comfort in unconditional free grace, which imputes Christ's righteousness and forgives sin. The only helper he knew was God, who justifies the ungodly (Rom. 4:5). The only experience of this acquittal he recognized was that which comes from outside of man through Word and Sacrament. Saving faith, he knew, originates irrespective of the fluctuating emotions of a frightened conscience, and only the work and miracle of the Holy Spirit can ever cause a sinner to say with certainty: "I am acquitted, for Christ loved me and gave Himself for me." For such faith, the believer remains dependent upon Christ alone, never upon himself. It is the nature of this faith that it places and keeps on placing its trust in the merits of Christ, in His gracious invitation, in the simple Word.

According to Luther, therefore, faith is the exact opposite of that "inner self-assurance" which mysticism recommends to frightened consciences and in which the liberalism of modern Protestantism has taken scantimonious refuge for 200 years. The Formula of Concord agrees with Luther when it emphasizes the consensus of all theologians of the Augsburg Confession to the effect that "all our righteousness is to be sought outside us [*extra nos*] and [outside] all human merit, work, virtue, and worthiness" (SD III 55). Faith involves the turning away from one's "own religion," the giving up of the *fata morgana* of one's own righteousness. Faith is the unheard-of daring act, by the power of the Holy Spirit, "through the Word to rise above oneself."²

The fact that faith anchors completely outside self was probably most impressively emphasized by Luther's famous addition to Melancthon's letter to Brenz: "And I, my dear Brenz, that I might better understand and comprehend the matter, think about it in this way, that in my heart there is no quality or virtue called faith or love, as the sophists [scholastics] speak and dream of it. But I base my claim altogether upon Christ and say: My *formalis iustitia*, that is, my certain, constant, perfect righteousness, which is without weakness or fault (but is as it should be in the sight of God) is Christ, my Lord. . . . [I look at it in this way] so that

² . . . "durch das Wort über sich zu fahren." Walch, 2d ed., 11, 1727; EA 14, 209 f., 219 f. [By Walch, 2d ed., the St. Louis Edition (Concordia Publishing House) is meant. It is hereafter referred to as SA in these footnotes.]

I may free and extricate myself from the view [that takes account] of the Law and my own works, yea, also from such a view of Christ as makes Him out for me to be either a teacher or a giver. Not so! But I want Him Himself to be my Gift and my Teaching, that I may have everything in Him, as He says: 'I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life.'"³

Dr. Martin Luther is simply and altogether a man of the Word. From a source outside Martinus comes the Word of the Law, and it breaks all his bones. Likewise from a source outside him comes the Word of the Gospel, and it alone gives him Christ's *aliena iustitia*. Thus Luther, in sharpest contrast to the mysticism of the Romanists as well as of the enthusiasts, derives his Christian being from the Word alone. This can easily be substantiated.

As early as 1520 Luther writes: "The Word of God is the first of all; it is followed by faith, faith by love; love then does every good work."⁴ In the same year he writes: "Let there be no prime principles of Christians except the divine words!"⁵ The word of the Gospel is an object of trust outside man, but it does not soar about somewhere in inactive transcendence, but creates its own human means of reception, namely faith by means of the peculiar power inherent in it. Thereby it manifests its divine authority. The *fides proprie dicta* (faith properly so called) then is really nothing but the dwelling of the Word of God and, thereby, of the Holy Spirit, in the heart. "Faith is having the Word in the heart and

³ "Und ich, mein lieber Brenz, dasz ich die Sache besser verstehe und fasse, pflege also zu gedenken, als wäre in meinem Herzen keine qualitas oder Tugend, die Glaube oder Liebe heisse — wie die Sophisten [Scholastiker] davon reden und träumen. Sondern ich setze es gar auf Christum und sage: Meine formalis iustitia, das ist gewisse, beständige, vollkommene Gerechtigkeit, daran kein Mangel noch Fehl ist (sondern ist, wie sie vor Gott sein soll), ist Christus, mein Herr. — Auf dasz ich mich also frei mache und herauswirke von dem Anblick des Gesetzes und der Werke, ja auch von dem Anblick dieses Christus, der mir fürkommt und verstanden wird, als sei er entweder ein Lehrer oder Geber. Nicht also! Sondern ich will, dasz er selbst meine Gabe und Lehre sei, dasz ich Alles in ihm habe, wie er spricht: 'Ich bin der Weg, die Wahrheit und das Leben.'" EA 58, 359; WA Briefe 6, p. 100 f.; Gustav Plitt in "Die Apologie, 1873, p. 122, dates the letter May 1531; *Corpus Reformatorum* II, 502 f.

⁴ "Verbum Dei omnium primum est, quod sequitur fides, fidem caritas, caritas deinde facit omne bonum opus." WA 6, 514 (*De captiv. Babyl.*).

⁵ "Sint ergo Christianorum prima principia nonnisi verba divina." WA 7, 98 (*Assertio omnium art.*).

not doubting it."⁶ "And finally there is nothing left for you to do but to surrender yourself to nothing within yourself or to any human comfort, only to the Word."⁷ "For the fixed resolve stands: You owe faith only to the Word of God, as God says in Rom. 10 (17)."⁸

Thus faith and all that flows from it is possible in the Christian only through God's holy Word. "One thing, and that one thing alone, is necessary for life, righteousness, and Christian liberty: it is the sacrosanct Word of God, the Gospel of Christ."⁹ Consequently confidence in oneself, in one's own human feeling, thinking, and experience must vanish before trust in the promises of the Gospel, before trust in Christ, who, on His part, can only be found in the Word through the Holy Ghost. "Experience has taught me this far too often: When the devil catches me outside Scripture, as I begin to go walking with my thoughts and also to flutter toward heaven, then he brings me to the point that I do not know where either God or I fit in. This truth (which the Holy Spirit is to teach in the heart) God wants so firmly fixed that one discards reason and all of one's own thoughts and feelings and clings solely to the Word and considers it the only truth."¹⁰ Luther's great "experience" was precisely this, that he did not seek and find faith, trust, and support in himself, but in the transsubjective promise of the Word of God that comes from outside man. "I speak thus according to Scripture, which is more certain to me than all experience and does not lie to me."¹¹

⁶ "Fides est, habere verbum in corde et non dubitare de eo." EA (Opp. exeg.) VII, 134.

⁷ "Und zuletzt ist doch kein Rat, denn dasz du dich auszer dir selbst und allem menschlichen Trost allein in das Wort ergebest." EA (2d ed.) 11, 29; SA 11, 455.

⁸ "Stat enim fixa sententia, fidem non deberi nisi certo verbo Dei, sicut dicit Rom. 10 (17)." WA 10-II, 194 (*Against King Henry of England*).

⁹ "Una re, eaque sola, opus est ad vitam, iustitiam, et libertatem Christianam, ea est sacrosanctum verbum Dei, evangelium Christi." WA 7, 50 (*Trac. de libertate Christiana*, 1520).

¹⁰ "Das hat mich die Erfahrung allzuoft gelehrt: Wenn mich der Teufel auszer der Schrift ergreift, da ich anfahe mit meinen Gedanken zu spazieren und auch gen Himmel zu flattern, so bringt er mich dazu, dasz ich nicht weisz, wo Gott oder ich bleibe. Also will er [Gott] diese Wahrheit (so der Heilige Geist im Herzen lehren soll) angebunden haben, dasz man Vernunft und alle eigenen Gedanken und Fühlen hintansetze und allein an dem Worte hange und für die einige Wahrheit halte." WA 46, 57; SA 8, 676.

¹¹ "Ich rede davon nach der Schrift, die mir gewisser ist denn alles Erfahren und lügt mir nicht." WA 10-II, 299; SA 10, 623.

Furthermore, the Word of God, used by the Holy Spirit as His saving means of grace, is directed against human reason, against human emotion. "When the Word of God comes, it comes against our intellect and desire."¹² "Thus God directs us to Himself and to His Word and shows that none meets God except only through His Word and that one cannot grasp the Word except by faith."¹³ And "faith teaches and holds on to truth; for it clings to Scripture, and Scripture does not deceive or lie."¹⁴

To his understanding of Scripture, given him by the Spirit, Luther owed also his deep insight into anthropology, which continued to be one of the fundamental contributions of the Reformation. All *religio* which is natural to man is *caro*, flesh.¹⁵ "It is an alien God in whom we place our confidence outside the Word."¹⁶ "It is in vain what people attempt to do for their salvation outside of His [God's] Word. He will not do it, He will not have it, He will not tolerate it. Therefore make use of His Book, in which He speaks to you."¹⁷

Because Luther had arrived at an understanding of these basic truths, he had come to that utter change, that transformation of being, which essentially consisted in this: He did not find the foundation of his faith and life in himself, in his religious mood, but in the Word of forgiveness spoken from without; and thus in his heart he believed in the Word of the Gospel. That alone quieted his conscience and gave him the Gospel certainty of salvation, a certainty that was real, because its source was not in man but in the objective Word of God.

¹² "Wenn das Wort Gottes kommt, kommt es gegen unseren Sinn und Wunsch." Ficker, *Luthers Vorlesungen über den Römerbrief*, II, 249, 3.

¹³ "Also weist uns Gott auf sich und auf sein Wort und zeigt an, dasz niemand Gott treffe, denn allein durch sein Wort, und dasz man das Wort nicht fassen könne, denn durch den Glauben." WA 16, 53; SA 3, 739.

¹⁴ "Glaube lehrt und hält die Wahrheit; denn er haftet an der Schrift, die trügt und lügt nicht." WA 11, 224; SA 11, 162.

¹⁵ WA 40-I, 347.

¹⁶ "Das ist ein fremder Gott, auf den wir auszer dem Wort unser Vertrauen setzen." EA (Opp. exeg.) XXII, 165; SA 6, 268 (Kurze Auslegung über Jesaia, 1527—1530).

¹⁷ "Es ist umsonst, was man vornimmt zur Seligkeit auszer seinem (Gottes) Wort. Er will's nicht tun, er will's nicht haben, er will's nicht anders leiden. Darum lasz dir sein Buch, darin er mit dir redet, befohlen sein." WA 48, 148 (Bucheinzeichnung Luthers).

Accordingly Luther certainly did not "make inner experience the only and decisive criterion of truth," as Simmel thinks. On the contrary, he saw it (if made basic) as the great factor of doubt, parent of the very *monstrum incertitudinis*, which is in sharp contrast to Christian faith. For "feeling is against faith; faith is against feeling."¹⁸ Therefore "do not rest upon yourself or your faith, creep into Christ, hide under His wings."¹⁹

Luther thanks His Lord for liberating him from this horror of uncertainty. He gives thanks that now the Gospel is our foundation, which does not direct us to look upon our good works and our imperfections but bids us rather to fix our eyes on God Himself, who gives the promise (*ipsum Deum promittentem*), and on Christ Himself, who is our Mediator (*ipsum Christum mediatorem*). "And this is the reason why our theology is certain: It tears us away from ourselves and places us outside ourselves, that we may not lean upon our powers, conscience, feeling, person, works, but that we may lean upon that which is outside us, that is, the promise and truth of God, which cannot deceive us."²⁰

In his article Simmel bases his false interpretation of Luther on a single quotation from Luther. But the conclusiveness of even this one quotation vanishes when viewed in its context. It is taken from a sermon Luther wrote August 10, 1522, on Matt. 7:15 ff. (the Gospel for the 8th Sunday after Trinity).²¹ The well-known pericope treats of false teachers and the marks by which a Christian can recognize them. Luther therefore does not deal extensively at this point with the certainty of the truth of salvation, but is speaking instead of the faith of the spiritual man, which alone enables him to recognize the false prophets and to avoid them. This faith must be the true faith; otherwise such recognition is impossible. It may not be mere *notitia* or *assensus*; but the true

¹⁸ "Fühlen ist wider den Glauben; Glaube ist wider das Fühlen." EA (2d ed.) 11, 219; SA 11, 627.

¹⁹ ". . . bleib nicht auf dir selbst oder auf deinem Glauben, kreich in Christum, halt dich unter seine Flügel." WA 10-I, 126 (1522).

²⁰ "Atque haec est ratio, cur nostra theologia certa sit: Quia rapit nos a nobis et ponit nos extra nos, ut non nitamur viribus, conscientia, sensu, persona, operibus nostris, sed eo nitamur, quod est extra nos, hoc est, promissione et veritate Dei, quae [nos] fallere non potest." WA 40-I, 589, 25; SA 9, 508 f. (on Gal. 4:6 in the large *Commentary on Gal.*, 1535).

²¹ WA 10-III, 257 ff.; EA 13, 231 f.; SA 11, 1397.

and therefore also the only saving faith is always a trusting faith, i. e., faith as full confidence in Christ and the forgiveness of sins which He merited for me before God (*fides specialis*). But such a faith is also *fides reflexa* in the case of conscious mature persons, a faith which makes the believer certain of being in the faith. Luther wants to emphasize this very personal certainty of faith against the decrees of the Pope and the councils. In doing so he again speaks in this connection about the Word of God. Just as certainly as $2+3=5$, and just as certainly as one yard is longer than half a yard, just so certain must the Word of God be for a Christian, even though councils decree otherwise. And then follows the sentence referred to by Simmel: "This you must feel and confess in your heart; if you do not feel this, do not think you have faith." (*Das muszt du fühlen und bekennen in deinem Herzen; fühlst du das nicht, so gedenke nur nicht, dasz du den Glauben hast.*) Then Luther continues: "Rather the Word is still ringing [merely] in your ears and is foaming upon your tongue like the foam upon the beer" (*Sondern das Wort hängt dir noch in den Ohren und schäumt dir auf der Zunge, wie der Schaum auf dem Bier*). In the same sermon Luther had said that in the hour of death it is of no avail to depend on Pope and councils. "For that reason you must know without doubting, so that you can say: This is God's Word; on this I take my stand."²² In this connection he adds that one should not try to find confidence and peace of conscience in the decrees of the Pope or the councils; for "this is a matter of saving your neck. Your life is at stake. Therefore God must speak into your heart and say: This is God's Word; otherwise it is not settled. Thus you must be certain within yourself, exclusive of all men."²³ Although the emphasis is here on faith itself, nevertheless Luther in this sermon bases this faith most emphatically upon the objective Word, which alone imparts faith and thereby generates firm, inner certainty in the first place. According to Luther this certainty is not based on the subjectivity

²² "Darum muszt du ohne Zweifel wissen, dasz du sprechen kannst: das ist Gottes Wort, da stehe ich darauf." WA 10-III, 259.

²³ ". . . es gilt dir deinen Hals, es gilt dir das Leben, darum musz dir Gott ins Herz sagen: das ist Gottes Wort, sonst ist es unbeschlossen, also muszt du gewisz sein bei dir selbst, ausgeschlossen alle Menschen." WA 10-III, 260.

of the Christian, is not anchored in anything inside man, but on something entirely outside the Christian, upon an extraneous foundation. For "faith forces us *extra nos ipsos, extra cor nostrum* . . . and leads me to Christ as my Foundation."²⁴

The Word of Holy Scripture in Luther's view was by no means, as Simmel insists, merely the subject matter which provided an occasion to ignite the experience, nor is it merely some sort of antecedent norm upon which to reflect after religious experience or decision. It was that for Luther, too, of course; but it was much more than that. It was the fire which, as an effective power, takes hold of spiritually dead, blind, cold man and kindles in him spiritual life and light. When man is rebuilt into a temple of God, he does not begin the work or lay the first stone. God alone does it, without any seeking or desire on the part of man. If man is to come to God, God must come to man, first with the Law and then with His sweet Gospel; and the Gospel must remain the mainstay of faith. "The Word of God is the first thing, the foundation, the rock upon which afterwards all works, words, thoughts, of man are built."²⁵

Toward the close of his article Simmel expresses the belief that he has found that immovable certainty of faith which in his opinion Luther cannot offer. He finds it in his own denomination, the visible Roman Catholic Church, and confidently asserts that in her complete certainty is to be found. For some time Neo-Protestantism, too, has shown a tendency of making the visible church a *rocher de bronze*, a tower of stability, the final court of appeal. What does Luther say to this? For him Scripture is the only and the supreme authority. He recognizes neither tradition nor any other ecclesiastical or papal authority as having any validity in contradiction or in addition to the Scriptures. And in this the Church of the Reformation is of one mind with Luther.²⁶ The church with all that she teaches, establishes, and confesses is for

²⁴ ". . . der Glaube reizt uns *extra nos ipsos, extra cor nostrum* . . . und führt mich auf Christum." WA 26, 165 f.; SA 7, 2214 f.

²⁵ "Das Wort Gottes ist das erste, der Grund, der Fels, darauf sich hernach alle Werke, Worte, Gedanken des Menschen bauen." WA 6, 356; SA 19, 1040 ("Ein Sermon von dem neuen Testament, das ist, von der heiligen Messe," August 1520).

²⁶ Smalcald Art.-II IV; -III VIII.

Luther a creature of the Word, a "creature of the Gospel, and incomparably less than this."²⁷ "For the Word of God is above the church, incomparably so; the church can establish, ordain, do, nothing in the domain of the Word, but can only let everything be established, be ordained, be done like the creature which she is. For who is there that begets his parents?"²⁸

Since for Luther only the authoritative Word of God, only the Bible, is "*verbum Dei infallibile*,"²⁹ therefore all faith, all comfort, and all *certitudo gratiae* flows not from his inner self, not from his experience as such, nor from the church, but from that "external Word" (*äusserlichem Wort*) which is the Word of the living Christ — which is, indeed, Christ Himself speaking, "to whom all things pertain."³⁰ "Now, when this Word comes into the heart by true faith, it makes this heart be like itself, makes it firm, certain and sure also, so that it becomes so obdurate, unyielding, and rigid against all temptation, devil, death, and whatever it may be, that defiantly and proudly it despises and scorns all that would doubt, tremble, be angry and wrath, for it knows that God's Word cannot lie. Such a person is . . . *certus passive* (one made certain), *sicut verbum Dei certum est active* (even as God's Word is that which makes certain)."³¹

The view that Luther's faith is rooted in subjectivism has gained widespread adherents during the last two centuries. It has also in part colored the Luther studies carried on in Sweden. To correct

²⁷ "Creatura evangelii, incomparabiliter minor," SA 2, 430 ("Resol. Luth.," 1519).

²⁸ "Verbum Dei enim supra ecclesiam est incomparabiliter, in quo nihil statuere, ordinare, facere, sed tantum statui, ordinari, fieri habet tamquam creatura. Quis enim suum parentem gignit?" WA 6, 560.

²⁹ WA 6, 560, 36.

³⁰ ". . . in quem omnia sunt referenda." WA Bibel 5, 11, 24.

³¹ "Wo nun dieses Wort in das Herz kommt mit rechtem Glauben, da macht es das Herz sich gleich, auch fest, gewisz, und sicher, dasz es so steif, aufrecht und hart wird wider alle Anfechtung, Teufel, Tod, und wie es heissen mag, dasz es trotzlich und hochmütiglich alles verachtet und spottet, was zweifeln, zagen, böse und zornig sein will, denn es weisz, dasz ihm Gottes Wort nicht lügen kann. Solcher Mensch ist . . . *certus passive* (gewisz Gemachter), *sicut verbum Dei certum est active*" (so wie des Herrn Wort gewiszmachend ist). WA 54, 32; SA 3, 1886 f.; EA 37, 8 ("Exposition of the Last Words of David," 1543).

this misrepresentation calls for renewed research of gigantic proportions. But only when the true picture of Luther has been restored, will Rome's claim to be the guarantor of objective certainty of salvation be fully exposed as fictitious. Rome will appear anew as actually representing a species of anthropocentric enthusiasm (Smalcald Art. III VIII, 4). And only when the myth of the predominantly or exclusively subjective character of Luther's faith has been dissipated and Luther's complete reliance on Christ's work and Word has been established, will it be possible to strike at the root of every kind of modern Protestant enthusiasm. A semi-agnostic *Schwärmerei*, also of the present more existentialistic type, would thus be deprived of one of its foremost patron saints.

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