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Haec Dixit Dominus

By TH. ENGELDER

Is there such a thing as doctrinal certainty? Luther says: "The preacher must not pray the Lord's Prayer and ask for forgiveness of his sin after his sermon (if he be a true preacher), but must proudly declare with Jeremiah: Lord, 'Thou knowest: that which came out of my lips was right before Thee' (Jer. 17:16); yea, he should declare boldly with Paul and all the Prophets and Apostles: '*Haec dixit Dominus*, God Himself hath said this.' *Et iterum*: 'In this sermon I have been an apostle and prophet of Jesus Christ. Here it is not necessary, not even good, to ask for the forgiveness of sins. For it is God's Word, not mine, and so there can be no reason for His forgiving me; He can only confirm and praise what I have preached, saying: "Thou hast taught correctly, for I have spoken through thee, and the Word is mine." Anyone who cannot say this of his preaching should refrain from preaching, for he would only be lying and blaspheming God." (St. L. Ed., XVII:1343.)

That is the voice of Christian certainty. The Christian theologian and the Christian layman should be, and is, sure that the doctrine he preaches and believes is God's truth. He bases his doctrine (1) not on the words of men, but on the sure Word of God; and (2) not on somebody's interpretation of Scripture, but on Scripture itself.

I

Thesis XXI of Walther's *The Evangelical Lutheran Church the True Visible Church of God on Earth* declares: "The Ev. Lutheran Church is sure that the teaching contained in its Symbols is the pure truth, the divine truth, because it agrees with the written Word of God in all points." The Christian is absolutely sure that the article which teaches the eternal deity of Christ is the eternal truth, because the Word of God, which "is truth" (John 17:17), teaches it. When we hear Scripture declare: "This [Jesus Christ] is the true God" (1 John 5:20), we say: "*Haec dixit Dominus*." And when we proclaim the deity of Jesus, we declare with full assurance: "*Haec dixit Dominus*." We Christians boldly declare that the sinner is justified, converted, saved, by grace alone, with-

out works, for the Bible, "the faithful Word" (Titus 1:9), says that in so many words, Rom. 3:28; Eph. 2:8-9. We are divinely assured that in the Lord's Supper Christ gives us His very body and blood to eat and to drink, for He Himself said: "This is My body," and His Apostle, His mouthpiece, declared: "The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" 1 Cor. 10:16. Can we have the assurance that our Bible is divinely inspired, true in every particular, infallible? Scripture, which "cannot be broken" (John 10:35), which is the "sure Word of Prophecy" (2 Pet. 1:19), says just that. It declares: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," 2 Tim. 3:16. And again: "Scripture cannot be broken," John 10:35. When we preach a sermon on Verbal Inspiration and proclaim that every book of the Bible, every chapter, every verse, and every word is God's eternal truth, we do not close by saying: We might be mistaken, but confidently declare: "*Haec dixit Dominus.*"

That applies to every single article of the Christian faith. For we take all these articles from the sure and faithful Word, which cannot lie. "The Ev. Lutheran Church accepts no teaching as an article of faith which is not contained in God's Word and is therefore not absolutely sure and certain" (Thesis XIX in Walther's essay). There could be no doctrinal certainty if we had produced the doctrine or if some great theologian or philosopher guaranteed its truth. "When we say: That man has said it, or: The councils have decreed it, you are building on sand" (Luther, XI: 1399). But we base our doctrine on the firm rock of God's Word. If we preached our own wisdom and conceit, we would speak in a very subdued voice. But since we can say with Luther: "I have by the grace of God most diligently compared all these articles with the Scriptures time and again," we shall say with Luther: "I confess my faith point by point [concerning all the articles of our religion], before God and all the world, in which I intend to abide until my death and therein (so help me God!) to depart from this world and to appear before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ" (Luther's *Confession of Faith*, XX:1094. See *Concordia Triglotta*, p. 981). Those who know their "doctrine to be supported by firm testimonies of Scripture," "to be built upon solid testimonies of the truth, which cannot be shaken," upon "the pure and immutable truth of God's Word,"

will go on to say: "We are sure concerning our doctrine and confession. . . . This confession we will retain to our last breath, when we shall go forth from this life to the heavenly fatherland to appear with joyful and undaunted mind and with a pure conscience before the tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ." (Preface to the Christian Book of Concord, *Conc. Trigl.*, pp. 7—21.) The subjective certainty of the Christian is based on the objective certainty of God's Word. It is only because God's infallible Word guarantees the truth of the Christian doctrine that we are sure of our Christian doctrine. But since "the Scriptures are our guarantee, they embolden us to challenge even an angel from heaven" (Luther XV: 13—49). Standing on Scripture, the believer is sure of his position and knows that he cannot be wrong. "Faith teaches and holds to the truth; for it clings to Scripture, which does not lie or deceive" (Luther XI:162). — Is there such a thing as doctrinal certitude? Luther: "A theologian and preacher must not say: 'Lord, forgive me if I have taught what is wrong'; but of everything that he teaches in public and writes he must be sure that it is absolutely true and say: 'God has spoken, taught, written this; it is His Word, therefore it is the sure truth' (XXII:1507).¹ There are men who receive the Word of Holy Scripture, "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God," and to them the Gospel comes "with much assurance" (1 Thess. 2:13; 1:5). There are men who are able to close their presentation of the Christian doctrine with a "*Haec dixit Dominus.*"

Subjective certainty is based on the objective certainty of God's Word. We are sure of our doctrine, because it is taken from Scripture. And, what is more, this firm, unshakable reliance on Scripture is created by Scripture itself. The Word of God communicates its strength and firmness to those who accept it. It comes to them with "power" (1 Cor. 2:4), "with much assurance." Standing on this rock, the Christian himself becomes a rock. Luther: "Man is *certus passive, sicut Verbum Dei certum est active*. Where this Word takes possession of the heart by true faith, it makes the

¹ The Christian preacher will after every sermon implore God's forgiveness. He may have said things that lacked Scripture authority, and he may have been somewhat hesitant about telling God's truth plainly. But he is certainly not going to ask God to forgive him that he spoke God's Word so boldly and asked all men to accept it.

heart as firm, sure, and certain as it is itself, unmoved, stubborn, hard in the face of temptation, the devil, death, and anything whatsoever, in proud confidence laughing to scorn all that spells doubt and fear, ire and wrath, for it knows that the Word of God cannot lie." (III:1887.) Begotten by incorruptible seed, by the Word of God, which liveth and abideth forever (1 Pet. 1:23), faith is living confidence, unwavering certainty, glad assurance. And when our assurance wanes, we need only go to our dear Bible to have our strength restored. "As soon as I take up a Psalm or passage of Scripture, it shines and burns into the heart and gives me new courage and a new mind" (VIII:749 f.). When the world scoffs at the doctrine of salvation by grace alone and my flesh begins to doubt, I take up Romans 3:28, and my heart rejoices over the wondrous ways of God. When ten thousand professors tell you that the doctrine of verbal inspiration is not in agreement with the facts, all you need to do is to ponder prayerfully 2 Tim. 3:16 or 2 Pet. 1:21 or John 10:35, and these almighty words will inspire you to declare with divine assurance: "*Haec dixit Dominus.*"²

This voice of doctrinal certitude has to a great extent been hushed within Christendom. It is not heard in the wide domain of the Pope. Naturally not, for Catholic theology says: "*Haec dicit ecclesia; haec dicit Papa.*" And what is the situation in the Protestant lands? Professor William Childs Robinson describes it thus: "Our day has lost her anchor in the Word of God and is wandering hither and thither in a feverish quest for something that is certain and stable. . . . The chord of certainty is absent from the harp of Neo-Protestantism. In place of assurance there is only the lure of a quest; in place of the sure Word of prophecy only the variables of human opinion. The relative, tentative, pragmatic, fleeting and mutually contradictory opinions of men

² *Divine assurance.* At the 1884 convention of the Synodical Conference, Walther said: "Note that our thesis uses the word: '*divinely assured.*' For the Turks, too, are sure of their faith, so sure that they die for it or go into the pesthouse and carry the corpses out on their shoulders. . . . But the false teachers cannot be divinely assured of their doctrine, for only the Word creates divine assurance." (*Proceedings*, p. 50.) The fact that the false teacher preaches his doctrine with great assurance should not shake our assurance and make us doubt the truth and certainty of God's Word. Heartened and emboldened by God's Word, we tell him: Your assurance is not of God.

have usurped the place of the absolute, the eternal, the unchanging truth of God." (*What Is Christian Faith?* pp. 15—21.) The modern Protestant frowns upon doctrinal certitude. Ralph W. Sockman declares: "When we start on the search for religious certainty and authority, we must realize that we travel in the realm of values and cannot, therefore, demonstrate absolute proof. 'Man,' says M. Murry, 'cannot accept certainties, he must discover them.' To be 'dead certain' would be deadly." (*Recoveries in Religion*, p. 36.) Charles S. Macfarland: "Let theology remain the queen of sciences, but perhaps the noblest achievement of the human intellect is the realization of its fallibility and frailty" (*Christian Unity in Practice and Prophecy*, p. 158). M. H. Krumbine (an ex-Lutheran): "The religion of a healthy mind will have to be intellectually sceptical. The one point at which science has qualified the task of religion unrestrainedly is in its attitude towards truth. Since the rise of science, truth will have to remain tentative. . . . There is no such thing as absolute truth; there are only hypotheses that work rather well, etc., etc." (*Ways of Believing*, p. 120.) The modern Protestant frowns upon certainty and is proud of his attitude of uncertainty. J. S. Whale praises Lessing for "his profound remark: 'If God held in His right hand all truth and in His left only the ever-active impulse to search for truth, even with the condition that I must always make mistakes, and said to me, "Choose!" I should humbly bow before His left hand and say: "Father, give me this. Pure truth belongs to Thee alone."'" (*The Chr. Answer to Prayer*, p. 49.) E. Grubb: "The indiscriminate use of Scripture as a single source of equal value . . . will, it is hoped, soon pass away never to return. The new view does not, it may be urged, give the same certainty as the old. But if the old is becoming incredible, what then? May we not be meant to understand that the desire for infallibility is itself unhealthy?" (*The Bible, Its Nature and Inspiration*, p. 240.) They glory in their lack of convictions and say with Professor Gajus G. Atkins: "It may be that one cross the spiritually sensitive and courageous man will have to bear for a long time now is the cross of uncertainty." (*Christianity and the Creative Quests*, p. 174.)

The spirit of present-day skepticism, says W. A. Caudler,

"believes that nothing ought to be believed with the confidence of settled faith. This incertitude is praised as the becoming posture of a cultured mind and applauded as the attitude of one who has attained lofty superiority to all prejudice. . . . However excusable men may be for entertaining definite and certain beliefs about anything else, they cannot be allowed to hold more than professional and transitory views concerning matters of religious faith." (*Christ and the Creed*, p. 29.) Even the liberal *Christian Century* deplores this state of affairs. "Nothing is so pathetic in modern Protestantism as its confusion over its own faith. It stands hesitant and uncertain in the presence of a society which has become indifferent to its appeal. The Church has passed out of the consideration and even the respect of vast numbers representing the sophisticated portion of the community. It confronts this condition with two competing strategies: that of an opaque and wooden conservatism against whose preachments the ears of the 'emancipated' are scornfully deaf; and that of a sycophantish liberalism which is engaged in adjusting and adapting Christianity to the 'religious values' which it pretends to find in the prevailing secularism. It is hoped thus to make 'religion' respectable and palatable." (April 25, 1945, p. 512.) The same issue prints a letter to the editor which says: ". . . There was a time when Protestants took seriously the *truth* which is in Christ. All they seem to care about now is 'ecumenicity.'" — The Apostle aptly described modern Protestantism when he spoke about "children tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14), "carried about with divers and strange doctrines" (Heb. 13:9), "ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of truth" (2 Tim. 3:7).

The doctrinal uncertainty of modern Protestantism is further evidenced by its readiness to exchange the old doctrine for new ones. It is necessary, say the moderns, that the old Christian doctrine be adjusted to present conditions, supplemented, improved, remodeled. Von Hofmann contended that it is the business of the theologian "die alte Wahrheit auf neue Weise zu lehren und sie, gehorsam der Fuehrung des Geistes Gottes, zu *mehren*." It goes against our grain to reproduce such statements, but truth compels us to do it.

V. Ferm repeats Von Hofmann's statement: "Much water has passed under the bridge since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries." But we must "make readjustments with the findings of the best Biblical scholarship and interpretation, with the recent scholarship." (*What Is Lutheranism?* p. 279.) K. Barth: "Von der Antwort, die das Wort Gottes gibt, koennen wir niemals als von einer fertigen Groesse reden. Die Frage nach unserer Existenz ist in jedem Augenblick neu da; eben darum ist es unmoeglich, dass das Wort eine ein fuer allemal geltende Erkenntnis bietet." (*Luthardt-Jelke, Kompendium der Dogmatik*, p. 53.) C. H. Dodd: "The method of reading the Pauline epistles as a set of documentary proofs for a fixed scheme of theology has resulted in giving a quite erroneous idea of Paul's real thought and, still more, in effectually concealing Paul the man behind a theological lay figure" (*The Authority of the Bible*, p. 12). C. S. Macfarland: "The fact is, the last word was not spoken yesterday and will not be today" (*Op. cit.*, p. 157). H. L. Willett: "There is no closed circle of divine revelation. God is ever speaking to the race through the mutations of human experience and through the lives of choice and elect souls who perceive more fully than their fellows the vision of truth." (*The Bible Through the Centuries*, p. 300.)

The moderns tell us that the Christian consciousness changes and so the doctrine that this consciousness demands must change. Schleiermacher: "The New Testament is the record of the Christian consciousness of the apostolic age; but the Christian consciousness of a later age may be different, and in so far as it may differ it has a right to supersede the record of the Christian consciousness of the early Church." To this Dr. Patton adds: "The outcome of this principle would be that the Christian consciousness being in a state of conscious flux, no one can predict what the consciousness of the next age will affirm, and therefore no one can put much confidence in what the Christian consciousness of the present age will confirm" (see *Theol. Monthly*, VI, p. 373). But William Temple, Archbishop of York, says: "We shall not suppose that it is the task of the Christian theologian to go on saying in every generation what was said by all his predecessors. The reason why theology must always be changing is that it represents a relationship between an unchanging

God and a changing world." (*The Church and Its Teaching*.) H. F. Rall: "Leaders tried to establish authoritative forms of organization and belief which should remain unchanged; but even apart from its decisions, the Church itself never remained the same in any two generations. . . . Christianity has been a religion of freedom and change and advance." (*A Faith for Today*, pp. 38, 40.) And E. H. Delk agrees with all this: "The final appeal is made to Christian consciousness. . . . There have always stood clear-eyed and honest champions of the necessity and right of Christian experience to interpret and enforce the truths of our holy faith. . . . Personal experience must be supplemented and balanced by other personal experiences in order to group the whole human spiritual experience. . . . It is this fact which makes the theology a progressive science and religious life." (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 59, p. 157.)

And so these men have nothing but contempt for those who, like the old-fashioned Lutherans, still cling to the old doctrine. *Christendom* declares: "Lutheranism still thinks in the dialectic of the Reformation. . . . What has served its day must be removed." (II, 4, pp. 437, 575.) E. E. Aubrey: "Out of the stuff of human life theology is born." "This often meant that they became fixated in loyalty to an old faith which was being modified and modernized in the old country. The Missouri Synod Lutherans came to be more conservative than the Lutheran Church in Germany and even sent missionaries back to the old country to overcome 'defections' there." (*Living the Christian Faith*, p. 36.) F. A. Kantonen: "I am convinced that the highest kind of scholarship can flourish only in such an institution as the Lutheran Church, a fellowship of believers not content with ready-made doctrine or institution, but ever searching the Scriptures for new truths and ever receptive and obedient to the Spirit of the living God" (*The Lutheran*, Jan. 2, 1936). And that, says the *Christian Century*, applies to all Churches. "Perhaps all can be right, even though they differ. . . . There is no unalterable doctrine, no system of doctrine which shall be valid to all eternity," to say which would betray "an opaque and wooden conservatism." (Feb. 10, 1937.) And the *Western Christian Advocate*: "The heterodoxies of one day have become the orthodoxies of the next. . . . New discoveries

have necessitated new statements of our faith. Our views of the Bible, our ideas as to God's relationship to the world have got to be reconstructed. The Church is not here to insist upon a certain theory of inspiration." (Dec. 22, 1927.) And G. A. Buttrick: "Meanwhile we should frankly admit the bankruptcy of 'literal infallibility' and under the guidance of the facts set out on the long hard quest for truth" (*The Chr. Fact and Modern Doubt*, p. 162).

Is that the position of the Church? Ira M. Boswell puts it in the form of a parable. "Some years ago I saw a church building which had been partially destroyed by fire. A large sign across the front of the building bore these words: 'This building will be changed to suit the tenants.' Many are doing their utmost to nail a similar sign upon the Church of Christ. Those who nailed the sign across the burned building had the right to do so. But what right has any man or set of men to nail such a sign on the Church which Jesus built and purchased with His own blood? Those who have the sign and the nails and the hammers in their hands claim that the old building with its furniture has become crude and inadequate, that it is out of date, and does not fit this age. . . . They undertake to remove the chief cornerstone, and say that there are many things they would not wish to restore. . . . So they go merrily on with their human blueprints, remodeling the building to suit the tenants. They claim to be dynamic, not static, and insist that we must have a dynamic and not a static Church. They seem to forget that no man can be loyal to the ideal Church and at the same time discredit the historical Church." (*God's Purpose Towards Us*, p. 66.) Luther has this to say: "Thus all preachers too should be sure and say: 'God says it, this is God's Word; and when I preach God's Word, that is as true as if I took an oath on it.' Whoever is not sure of it and cannot say: 'God speaks it,' should quit preaching; for he is not going to do anything good with such preaching." (VI:879.) Pieper has this to say: "Today we have to call particular attention to the fact that Paul insists on the perfection and completeness of the Apostolic doctrine also over against such teachers as find it necessary to supplement and augment the doctrine of Christ on the pretense of a higher philosophical knowledge and spirituality. He says of all who believe the doctrine of Christ, preached

by the Apostles, that they 'are complete in Him,' Col. 2:9." (*Christliche Dogmatik*, I, p.148.) And Scripture tells us: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our Epistle," 2 Thess. 2:15. See also 1 Tim. 6:14 f. Also v.20; 2 Tim. 3:14 ff.; Titus 1:9; Acts 2:42. And Jude, v. 3: "Ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints."³

The cause of this uncertainty and instability of doctrine is apparent. Study Buttrick's statement: "Meanwhile we should frankly admit the bankruptcy of 'literal infallibility' and under the guidance of the facts set out on the long hard quest for the truth." Give up the inspiration of the Bible, and nothing is left but uncertainty of doctrine. Every one of the men I mentioned is opposed to the verbal inspiration of Scripture—the only kind of inspiration that deserves the name—and every one of them is proclaiming the theology of doubt. Quoting K. Barth's statement: "We said of church proclamation that from time to time it must become *God's Word*; and we said the same of the Bible, that it must from time to time *become God's Word*." H. Sasse goes on to say: "The means of grace are thus limited for Barth. The preacher descending from the pulpit can never quote Luther and say with joyful assurance that he has preached the Word of God, '*Haec dixit Dominus*.'" (*Here We Stand*, p. 161 f.) And denying Verbal Inspiration, saying that the contents and thought of John 3:16 are indeed inspired, but not the *words* of John 3:16, he never knows how much of John 3:16 is inspired. "Da kann dir der Teufel alsobald ein Loch machen und eingeben: 'Wie, wenn es falsch waere? wie, wenn sie geirrt haetten?' Wenn dir eine solche Versuchung einkommt, so

³ Men who insist on saying that our search for the truth must be lifelong and offer as Scripture proof for this idea 1 Cor. 13:9, 10, 12, should study the *Proceedings of the Synodical Conference*, 1888, p. 19: "Um diese These zu widerlegen, hat man sich berufen, zum Beispiel, auf 1 Cor. 13:9: 'Unser Wissen ist Stueckwerk, und unser Weissagen ist Stueckwerk.' Man sagt, wir koennen niemals behaupten, wir haben die Wahrheit; da gelte es, niemals der christlichen Bescheidenheit vergessen. . . . Die Antworten auf diese Einwuerfe sind schon in dem Vortrag des Referenten enthalten. In dem Spruch 1 Cor.13:9 ff. hat Paulus unser Wissen in dieser Zeit im Vergleich mit dem in der Ewigkeit im Auge, nicht den Gegensatz zwischen *Wahrheit haben* und *nicht haben*." Yes, we know only *in part*, but what *we* know in part *we* know. See F. Pieper, *Chr. Dogmatik*, I, p. 396.

liegst du schon hernieder. Darum musst du des Gewissen spielen, dass du keck und trotzig darfst sagen: 'Das ist Gottes Wort; da will ich ueberlassen Leib und Leben und hunderttausend Haelse, wenn ich sie haette.' 1 Pet. 4:11; 1 Cor. 2:3, 4, 5." (Luther, XI:1395.) "Beware, beware, I say, of this 'divine-human' Scripture! It is a devil's mask; for at last it manufactures such a Bible after which I certainly would not care to be a Bible Christian, namely, that the Bible should henceforth be no more than any other good book, a book which I would have to read with constant discrimination in order not to be led into error." (Walther, *Lehre u. Wehre*, 1886, p. 76.) Or — and this amounts to the same thing — man is made the authority in religion. As a writer in the *Atlantic Monthly* puts it: "The final basis of religious authority for you is yourself, your mind working on all that has come down in the religious tradition of Christianity and selecting and making your own those things which satisfy the requirements of your intelligence, of your moral judgment, of your spiritual hunger. . . . The basis of religious authority is shifting from the Bible to the individual." (See *Prophecy's Light on Today*, p. 92.) But where man is made the authority in religion, there can be only doubt. Where this inscription is nailed to the Church: "*In ecclesia non valet: Hoc ego dico, hoc tu dicis, hoc ille dicit, sed: Haec dicit Dominus*" (Augustine), there you have a sure Word. But where human authority rules, there uncertainty rules. There men "are ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of truth" (2 Tim. 3:7).

Nor to the assurance of salvation. These two things go together: assurance of salvation and assurance of the truth. Luther was so much concerned about certainty because he was so much concerned about his salvation. He declared: "*Sollst du selig werden, so musst du des Worts der Gnaden so gewiss fuer dich selbst sein, dass, wenn alle Menschen anders spraechen, ja alle Engel Nein sagten, du dennoch koennst allein stehen und sagen: Noch weiss ich, dass dies Wort recht ist.*" (VIII, 1003.) Edwin Lewis, who, by the way, does not believe in Verbal Inspiration, still declares: "'Give us a sure word.' This is the cry which we daily hear. 'We are lost in a jungle; lead us to the highway. Tell us, is there nowhere one word which stands above all other words; no truth of rocklike quality which nothing can move? . . . Tell

us, must we always build up only to tear down? . . ." (*The Faith We Declare*, p. 188.) J. H. Leckie, who insists that "it is certainly true that the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy and plenary inspiration, in the old sense, is among the things that have been and the powers that are dead," still cries out: "Religion without certainty is religion without strength. . . . It may be that the Church must ever wander a while in the desert; it may be that the word of reconciliation cannot be spoken till the thought and research of this age have performed their perfect work." (*Authority in Religion*, pp. 50, 54, 64.) And T. A. Kantonen declares: "Souls homesick for eternity are left to the mercy of the moment. To have something positive to say to our bewildered generation we must heed the apostolic advice: 'Hold fast the form of sound words.' . . . 'I see on all sides,' said Van Wyck Brooks, 'a hunger for affirmations.'" (*The Message of the Church to the World of Today*, pp. 3, 10.) It does not matter so much that the scientists have not yet agreed whether the Copernican or the Ptolemaic system is right. It is a matter of little importance whether the sun is one million or ten million miles distant from the earth. But the anxious sinner must know whether God is gracious to him. On this question there must be no doubt in his mind: "There are many good men to whom this doubt is more bitter than death" (*Apology, Conc. Trigl.*, p. 291.) And "these things I will that thou affirm constantly," Titus 3:8. "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ," Acts 2:36. "Rooted and built up in Him and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught," Col. 2:7.

The urgent needs of men demand that we speak to them with doctrinal certainty. And God's admonitions require it. God will not have His Church play the role of a philosophical society which meets to debate the truth or falsity of propositions set before it, but God has appointed the Church of the living God to be "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15), and wants it to speak His truth with assurance. "This confidence I have to God in Christ that my doctrine and preaching is truly God's Word. If a man cannot be sure of this and would still be a teacher and ruler of the Church, it were better for him, as Christ says Matt. 18:6, that a mill-

stone were hanged about his neck and that he be cast into the sea, for he preaches and works nothing but the devil's lies and death." Thus Luther, XIII:839. Luther again: "What need would there be for a Church of God in the world, of what use would a Church be, if she wanted to waver and be unsure in her message or offer something new every day, now giving something, now taking away something?" (XVII:1340.) And Pieper agrees with Luther. He says: "Wer die Wahrheit erst noch *suchen* will, der soll den Mund halten in der Kirche. . . . Wer vor die *Christen* als Lehrer hintritt, der soll gewiss sein, dass er *Gottes Wort* lehre." (*Vortraege ueber Walthers Die wahre sichtbare Kirche Gottes auf Erden*, p. 156.) God's will and the needs of the Church are served only by unwavering affirmations.

To be sure, most men do not like to be served with such affirmations. Walther told us years ago: "Even in circles of so-called believers, people act as if they were shocked when they hear someone say: 'I have found the truth. I am certain concerning every doctrine of revelation.' Such a claim is considered a piece of arrogance." (*Law and Gospel*, p. 30.) Luther was charged with "megalomania, hallucinations, illusions, 'transitory dementia'" (H. Boehmer, *Luther in Light of Recent Research*, p. 24). Luther was censured by Erasmus for "an obstinacy of assertion." But that did not deter him. He wrote: "Not to delight in assertions is not the character of the Christian mind; nay, he must delight in assertions, or he is not a Christian. By assertion I mean a constant, adhering, affirming, confessing, defending, and invincible persevering. The Holy Ghost is not a skeptic, nor are what He has written on our hearts doubts or opinions, but assertions more certain and more firm than life itself and all human experience." (XVIII:1674, 1680.) When he was accused of being "eigensinnig," he declared that he was that, indeed, "eigensinnissimus" (see Th. Traub, *Handreichung*, p. 89). When he was defamed for this theological obstinacy, he declared: "I am as dogmatic as Holy Scripture." He knew, of course, that if it had not been delivered to us in Scripture, it "would be not only absurd, but impious" to maintain these things, but as he was insisting on the truth of what was "delivered to us from above in Holy Scriptures" (XVIII:1674.), he declared: "In this book of mine I have asserted, and still do assert, and I wish

none to become judges but all to yield assent" (XVIII:1969). "So will auch ich nichts hoeren, was meiner Lehre zuwider ist" (IX:265). The *Christian Century* calls this an "opaque and wooden conservatism," and a Lutheran journal spoke of such a mind as being "bull-dogmatic." But will some men have the theologian say: Here is God's Word, but I cannot rely on it? The Lutheran Church will not be guilty of the blasphemy of saying that certain doctrines held by it cannot be held with assurance. When two delegates to the meeting of the Synodical Conference in 1882 demanded that the conference admit the *possibility* of being in the wrong in its doctrinal position, the answer was given: "So kann kein Christ stehen, der die Wahrheit des goettlichen Wortes erkannt hat." (See *Proceedings*, p. 43 f.) The Holy Scriptures teach these things, and I shall not be permitted to teach and affirm and maintain the same? ⁴

No, no, since God said it, we shall say it, and we are infallibly sure of it. "Yes, so far as and so long as we take our position on the Word, we are infallible. In ourselves we are persons who are subject to error; yes, if we had to decide the matter, we could only err. But in so far as and because we stand on God's Word, as it reads, we do not err in our doctrine, but are infallible and can boldly say: 'This is most certainly true.' All doubt and all disputation ends as soon as

⁴ The *Lutheran Witness*, August 7, 1898, wrote: "The *Lutheran* charges that Missouri claims for herself infallibility in doctrine and is, hence, papistic in principle. A week later the General Synod editor writes: 'Our doctrinal system commits us to the infallible Scriptures.' The editor, then, has a system of doctrines. He has something to teach people. What he teaches is from the Scriptures. That he is certain of. His system commits him to the Scriptures. The Scriptures are infallible. That, too, the editor is certain of. Now the question is: When the editor teaches doctrine of which he is certain that it is from the infallible Scriptures, may he, as does Missouri, with infallible certainty state in regard to all doctrines: 'So Scripture teaches?' Again, if the editor had not such 'divine conviction' and 'infallible certainty' regarding his doctrinal system, would he undertake to teach it to anybody? Really, we do not see why the kindly editor would be so eager to rule Missouri papistic on this point. . . . The aforementioned editor goes on to say unblushingly, in true Missourian, alias papistic, style: 'Does any one suppose that the entire Lutheran Church would accept the doctrine of the Augsburg Confession, if it did not believe them to be in accordance with the inspired revelation of God?' We can only say, in view of the editor's remarks about Missouri's papism, that we doubt whether to 'accept' a doctrine, and to 'believe it to be in accordance with the inspired revelation of God,' means the same thing to the editor. It does with us."

we can produce a clear statement of Scripture for our doctrine. . . , 1 Thess. 2:13. Not because Paul preached it unto them, but because the Thessalonians received Paul's word as God's Word they were divinely sure of the doctrine." (*Proceedings, Central District, 1892, p. 29.*) At the convention of the Synodical Conference in 1888 Dr. F. Pieper had stated: "In the doctrine we are not subject to error, but are infallible, in so far as and because we stand on God's Word as it reads. We speak as God's Word speaks. We need only repeat in our doctrines what God's Word has so clearly told us; that is our whole art. The Lutheran Church insists that it possesses the sure, the whole truth because it accepts the sure, the whole truth, as it reads." (*Proceedings, Synodical Conference, 1888, p. 18.*) In his "Vortraege" Dr. Pieper related: "We took up this subject three years ago in Milwaukee. I had said in the essay: 'In the doctrine we are not subject to error, but are infallible, in so far as and because we stand on God's Word as it reads.' This statement has been making the rounds in Germany ever since. People are aghast over it. One cannot understand why within the Christian Church anyone should express doubt about the correctness of this statement. Is there any truth at all in the world if one can be in error when one takes his position on God's Word, as it reads? when one speaks God's Word, as it reads? That certainly would be the limit; in that case we close up our Bible and many other books, we close up our churches and say with Pilate: 'What is truth?'" (P. 148.) God has revealed the truth, and we shall say: "*Haec dixit Dominus!*"

Men may stand aghast at such temerity, but we know that the Lord will not reprove us for it. "Therefore you can joyfully speak to Christ both when you die and at the Final Judgment in this manner: My dear Lord Jesus Christ, a dispute has arisen concerning Thy words in the Communion; some insist that they must be understood differently from the way they read. However, since they teach me nothing certain but only confuse me and make me uncertain and neither want nor are able to prove their text in any way, therefore I have remained upon Thy text as the words read." (Luther, XX:1037.) "No," says Luther, "I will not thus fly about; He has said it, and that settles it; if He deceives me, I am

blessedly deceived. He has never once lied, and He cannot lie." (XX:1780.) *Haec dixit Dominus!*⁵

But, say some here, the Lord will tell Luther that he based his doctrine, not on Scripture, but on his interpretation of Scripture. Where does that leave Luther?⁶

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Light from the Papyri on St. Paul's Terminology

By ERIC C. MALTE

The problem of defining the type of Greek in the Pauline Epistles has, in the past, afforded ample room for much controversy. It remained for Adolf Deissmann to discover that while the language of the New Testament differs from classical Greek, it is neither "Special Greek," nor "Aramaic Greek," nor "Biblical Greek"; still less is it "tired Greek" or "bad Greek."¹ H. R. Minn says:

"For the lucid explanation and substantial proof of the real character of New Testament Greek we are indebted to the mental alertness of the German scholar Adolf Deissmann. The story is an interesting one, a good instance of the potency of small things. In 1895, Herr Deissmann, at the time not a university professor or even a clergyman, but a young can-

⁵ *The Lutheran*, February 3, 1927: "In those days men had convictions that were as dear to them as life, and when they could not agree, they agreed to work apart. Controversy in those days was not condemned as seems to be the case today, for the new name for convictions is 'prejudices.'" *Theological Monthly*, 1926, p. 326: "Oh, for that fire of deep, honest conviction which burned in the hearts of our fathers and made them love and cherish the doctrines of the Bible as an immovable and everlasting foundation! Their firm conviction amounted to a consuming passion for the sacred teachings which would not entertain the thought of compromise with the gainsayers. Where you have such staunch convictions, unionism does not find a fertile soil." Pieper's "Vortraege, etc.," p. 168: "Als man dem Kurfuersten von Sachsen auf dem Reichstage zu Augsburg andeutete, er koenne Land und Leute verlieren, wenn er bei der Augsburgischen Konfession bleibe, entgegnete er, er wolle lieber Land und Leute, als Gottes Wort verlassen. Wenn der Kurfuerst ein moderner Lutheraner gewesen waere, der erst feststellen wollte, was eigentlich goettliche Wahrheit sei, dann haette er gedacht: es ist doch besser, du behaltest dein Reich, als dass du an der Augsburgischen Konfession festhaeltst."

⁶ Part II, the answer to this question, will appear in an early issue.

¹ Deissmann, Adolf. *Light from the Ancient East*. London: Hodder and Stoughton (1911); *The New Testament in the Light of Modern Research*. London: Hodder and Stoughton (1929).