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DECLARATION AND PLEA

We, the Queensland District of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia, in convention assembled, mindful of the Lord's solemn warnings concerning the Last times, and of our obligation to confess – and not to deny by silence – Him and His Word, do therefore in the fear of God declare our conscientious convictions about the great issues facing Christianity everywhere today.

We earnestly plead with all 'orthodox Christians everywhere, particularly the public teachers of the Church to take their stand with us, individually and collectively, against the twin evils of Liberalism and Ecumenism, which so gravely imperil the Lord's Vineyard in our time. If someone blessed with the gift of prophecy and discernment of spirits, will improve the wording or form of our declaration, so as to safeguard the truth and unmask error more effectively, we shall greatly welcome such a service of brotherly love.

We also ask everyone to note from the outset that this our declaration is intended not as a relief map, describing the whole, rich, ultimately inexhaustible fullness of the mysteries of God's Word and Church but only as a humble chart of certain clearly definable limits or boundaries, within which Biblical studies and Christian re-union efforts must remain, if they are not to the authority and majesty of God in His Word and thus cease to be Christian.

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BECAUSE Christian faith submits with unquestioning obedience (2 Cor. 10,15) to Christ as the only Lord and Teacher, and because He, both directly in His own words and example, and indirectly, through the inspired words of his chosen writers, guarantees the Bible as His Word (Matt. 5:17-19; Matt. 22:29; Mar4k 7:13; John 5:46,47; John 10:35; John 14:26; John 16:13; John 15:20; John 17:20; Acts 24:14; Rom. 3:2; 2Tim.3:15ff.) we joyfully confess the entire Holy Scripture, as it was originally given by the Holy Spirit through the sacred writers, to be unconditionally the Word of God written down in human language. Being God's Word which "can neither err nor deceive" (Luther's Large Catechism, Baptism, par.57), Holy Scripture is inerrable (John 10:35), clear (Psalm 119:105), sufficient (2 Tim. 3:17) and only (Matt. 15:9) basis of the Church's teaching (Eph.2:20).

We therefore reject, with heart and mouth, the whole liberal, modern-theological attitude to Scripture, because it, in the interests of and anti-Christian world view, attacks Christ's Lordship and teaching authority, rationalises away the offence of the cross, and, by its disdain of the plain, simple facts of the Biblical narrative as it reads, fundamentally contradicts the very incarnation! In particular, we reject and warn against the following errors as symptoms of this wrong approach:-

1.ERROR: That the Bible is God's Word only in some secondary sense; or that it is not itself God's Word, truth and revelation but only a witness, record, or medium thereof.

REFUTATION: This contradicts Rom.3:2 and 2 Tim.3:16, according to which Scripture is "the oracles of God" and "God-breathed". And the Lord attributes even the highly personal Psalms to the Holy Spirit, Mark 12:36.

2.ERROR: That the Bible was not meant, and therefore should not be taken, as a real doctrinal revelation, revealed doctrine; that absolute, objective, final truth – as distinguished from human opinions and "interpretation" of it – is therefore not available here on earth; that doctrinal certainty is presumption and illusion; that "pure doctrine" is only an ideal which cannot be reached in practice; that orthodox doctrinal statements are not simply correct repetitions, applications, or restatements of divine, Scriptural truth itself, but only human approximations, "responses", "witness", "formulations", etc., and that the real truth continues to hover inaccessibly beyond and behind all concrete statements or

“formulations”; or that it is the business of the Church and of theology to try to discover or to theorise about the real meaning of the Gospel, rather than to proclaim and apply it; or that Christian faith is only a trust in God and not also a belief **about** him.

REFUTATION: Christ founded not a debating society for the discussion and eventual discovery of the truth, but a teaching Church for the proclamation and confession of revealed truth, Matt. 10:32 :Matt. 28:19,20. Christ promised that we would “know the truth”, John 8:31. It is impossible to accept Christ as God-made-flesh, and then to suppose that He was unable or unwilling to honour his promises and left his Church perpetually in doubt about His message and its exact meaning! To preach doubt and uncertainty therefore is to reject not only Scripture, but also the Christ, Whose teaching, life, death and resurrection back and guarantee the Scriptures. Doctrinal uncertainty and confusion are marks not of humility, but of the unbelief of Pontius Pilate (What is truth?": John 18:38) and of Satan (“Yea hath God said?" Gen 3:1) Christian faith says “The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is the word of faith, which we preach.”(Rom 10:18). Therefore “good consciences cry out for the truth and correct instruction from God’s Word, and for them death is not as bitter as is doubt on any point of doctrine” (Apology,XII,129). Christian teachers must utter divine truth and treat it as such, 1 Peter 4:11. As to the object of faith the New Testament clearly teaches that faith in Christ must include the right belief about Him, in other words right doctrine, Matt. 16:13ff; Mark 8:38; John 5:46,47; Acts 24:14 Hebrews 11:1ff.

And only illiteracy or sophistry can object that John 14:6,” I am the Way, the Truth, and the life, “abolishes the usual meaning of the word “truth” as correctness, for it is clear that the Saviour is here not giving new definitions of the words “way”, “truth”, and “life”, but is using their old and accepted meanings to teach something new about Himself.

3. ERROR: That inspiration was something less than the divine communication of the very words of the sacred text, so that inerrancy does not necessarily follow from such “inspiration” or that the “inerrancy”, as applied to Scripture, might mean something, other than the total absence of any errors or contradictions whatsoever; or that inerrancy could be limited to the “theological content” or the “divine side” of Scripture, as distinguished from the entire sacred text as such; or that things presented as facts by Scripture might be “theologically true” without being factually true; or that “inerrancy” could be defined on the basis of an explanation of the text for alleged errors, rather than solely and **alone** on the basis of the texts which the Bible itself explicitly teaches its own inspiration and inerrancy.

REFUTATION: If Scripture is really God’s Word then it is, unreservedly “truth”, John 17:17, and this is not in any vague, or figurative sense, but in a way that individual proof-texts can support precise argumentation and be pressed to the limits of their logical implications. Matt.22:23; Acts 17:2. “Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35, not even on such a minor issue as the exact wording of Ps. 82:6! Nor can inerrancy be limited to “theological matters”: “If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall you believe, if I tell you heavenly things?” John 3:12. Or: Believing **all things** which are written in the law and the prophets,” Acts 24:14. And unlike pagan mystery religions, holy Scripture does not teach by means of fables or myths, 1Tim:1:4; 4:7; 2Tim.4:4; Tit. 1:14; 2 Pet.1:16.

4.ERROR: That when the New Testament asserts something about the origin or meaning of a portion of the Old Testament, this need not bind us in terms of fact, but may be regarded as a “theological interpretation”, rather than as the true, historical, original and intended sense of the Old Testament text in question.

REFUTATION: Christ and His Apostles never claimed that they were reading things into the Old Testament which were not there. (Who would have paid any attention to such nonsense?) Rather, they claimed to be giving the true, natural and original meaning of the Old Testament prophecies. When Christ says that Moses wrote of Him, John 5:46, or when John says that Isaiah “saw His Glory and spoke of Him”, John 12 41, or when Peter says that David, in Ps. 16, “seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ”” Acts 2:31, then no contrary opinion can be entertained where the one, Holy, Christian, and Apostolic Church is seriously confessed.

To understand and interpret the Old Testament in any way other than did Christ and his Apostles, is to deny the risen Saviour, Who, “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets..... expounded unto them in all

the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.” (Luke 24:27, 45). And it is contrary to both faith and reason to think that we today can have a better understanding of Scripture or Christianity than did Christ and His Apostles, upon whom the Church is founded. Eph.2:20.

5. ERROR: That Genesis 1-3, for example could be taken in some figurative sense, so that “theistic evolution” would be permitted as at least a possible explanation of the way in which the human body was formed.

REFUTATION: The New Testament (Matt. 19:4); Luke 3:38; Rom. 5: 12-21; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim. 2:13,14) clearly take the creation and fall narratives as literal, historical fact, and thus rules out evolution. Not only the authority of the Holy Writ. But the doctrine of Man, the doctrine of sin, and the doctrine of the Redemption are undermined by any compromise with evolution.

6. ERROR: That the great redemptive acts of God (the Incarnation, the Atonement, the resurrection, etc.) took place in some sort of “super-history or in another realm than the ordinary, calendar history; or that a fact like the resurrection was of such a nature that it could in principle be seen only with “the eyes of faith”.

REFUTATION: This is rank unbelief cloaking itself in the garments of faith; for if the body of Christ could be seen, also by unbelievers, to be absent from the grave, the stone rolled away, etc., then there simply was a resurrection! According to the New Testament the resurrection was witnessed precisely by the **unbelieving** soldiers guarding the tomb. Matt. 28:41! Any “resurrection” without a removed stone, and empty grave, etc., which could in principle have been photographed, is only human mummery and not the resurrection of the Son of God! According to the Gospels, the objective eternal **fact** of the resurrection produced the faith in the resurrection, not the faith the fact. John 20 and 21! To question and weaken in any way the historical, factual character of any event in the life of Christ, is a mark of “that spirit of antichrist” which denies that Jesus is come **in the flesh** (1 John 4:2)!

7. ERROR: That the old, orthodox, Scriptural position on revelation, inspiration, and inerrancy, is “intellectualism”, or “scholasticism”, etc.

REFUTATION: Since God’s revelation in Scripture consists of intelligible words, language, statements, teachings, propositions, and is therefore addressed to man through his mind, reason, or understanding, and can be received in no other way, it is self-evident that reason as a SERVANT, that is, as the ability to grasp the meaning of what is said, must be used to receive God’s Word, Ps 119:100; Matt. 13:13-17; Mark 12:33; Acts 8:30; Rom. 10:14; 1 Cor. 14. Real rationalism is the use of reason as a MASTER, as an Authority above or besides Scripture, judging what is true and what is not. This is forbidden, Prov. 3:5; 1 Cor. 1 and 2; 2 Cor. 10:5. It is precisely the above-mentioned errors of modern theology which are examples of rationalism and scholasticism, for they follow human reason and wisdom away from Scripture!

And the orthodox Christian doctrine of Scripture rests not on rational proof of any kind, but only on the clear statements of the Word of God itself, accepted at face value in faith and obedience! Nor did the orthodox Church ever believe in a mechanical doctrine of inspiration, but held that the Holy Spirit made full use of the writers’ personalities, experiences, researches, vocabularies, and so on..

8. ERROR: Any other notion. “insight”, or “interpretation” which will not let Scripture interpret itself, but introduces other, human notions and standards of judgment above or beside Scripture; for instance any form of the persistent attempt to distinguish within Scripture between an “abiding truth” and a temporary, expendable and replaceable “pre-scientific historical framework”.

REFUTATION: This is to tear asunder what God has indissolubly joined together, Mark 14:9, **namely** the divine, eternal Word and truth, the human, earthly, concrete historical statement of it in Scripture. Beyond Scripture there is no appeal. Apart from or beyond what the self-interpreting sacred text actually says, there can be no theology, but only presumptuous speculation – darkness! And apart from Scriptural theology, particularly the doctrine of the absolute authority of Christ and His Scripture, any

allegedly “objective”. “historical” study of the Bible is pure illusion, is in fact a futile exercise in subjective unbelief Matt. 12:30.

No honest and informed person can deny that the doctrine of Scripture here set forth, both in the positive and negative statements, is the very position which is taught and assumed throughout the Lutheran Confessions. Without this position, the Reformation’s great “sola Scriptura” (Scripture alone) is meaningless and impossible. We therefore solemnly and emphatically reject as spurious and fraudulent, and as betrayals of Bible and Reformation, any professions of loyalty to “the Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions” which in any way defend or leave the slightest room for the grave errors listed above. No one can justly claim to be a friend of the “superstructure”, the Confessions, who undermines their necessary foundation in the authority of Holy Scripture!

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BECAUSE in the confusion of these last times most Christians live as it were under a “Babylonian captivity”, that is. In church-bodies which fly the flag of false doctrine, spiritual piracy, rebellion against Christ and His Word, we distinguish sharply between the many dear children of God, the true Christians in these bodies on the one hand, and their spiritual oppressors and misleaders, that is, the representatives of false systems, on the other. With the former, who like Absalom’s followers “went in their simplicity and they knew not anything” (2 Sam. 15:11) who honour and love God’s Word and who would therefore, if they understood the real issues, “through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, turn to the infallible truth of the divine Word and unite with us in our churches and schools” (Preface to the Book of Concord), we know ourselves to be one in Christ. 1 Cor. 12:12; Eph. 2:11-12; even though we cannot always distinguish them from the Godless multitude in which they are hidden. Rom 11:1-5. But against the latter, the public misleaders of God’s people, the representatives of falsehood and rebellion, and official organisations and agencies we must apply the many texts of Holy Scripture which forbid complicity with false teachers. It is just **because** the true Visible Church represents the one, true, Apostolic Faith of all Christians, and therefore the most vital interests of the whole Universal Church, that she must assert the ONE Lord, ONE Faith, ONE Baptism, Eph. 4:5, against the “Babylonian” anti-Church, which torments the Christians with false doctrine, Rev. 17. We see the organised Ecumenical Movement, including the Roman Papacy, as an expression of this counterfeit Church.

It follows, BECAUSE Church Fellowship is God-pleasing and truthful only when it is based on and regulated by the pure marks of Christ’s one Universal Church, that is the pure teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments (Matt. 15:9; Acts 2:42; Rom.16:17; Gal.1:8; Eph.2:20; 2John 10:11; compare also Augsburg Confession and Apology, VII,33; X,31), that we must refuse, as treason and rebellion, all church fellowship- also in the form of joint worship in “Minister’s Fraternal” :-

(1) To all churches which persistently teach and tolerate, in their own midst or in churches with which they are in fellowship, public errors contrary to Holy Scripture, particularly dangerous modern errors like (1) to (8) above;

(2) To all member churches of the World Council of Churches and/or the Lutheran World Federation, as at present constituted, because these two organisations as such carry out spiritual churchly functions, and therefore act as churches, and yet make no effective distinctions between truth and error, but tolerate in their membership almost every heresy which has ever appeared in Christendom.

May God the Lord bless this humble defence of His Vineyard (Ps 80), so that we, His unworthy servants, may give ourselves wholly and faithfully to the sacred work of His Kingdom, and be ever built up in faith and love, by His Holy Word and Sacraments, as living, fruitful branches in Him Who is the True Vine (John 15)!