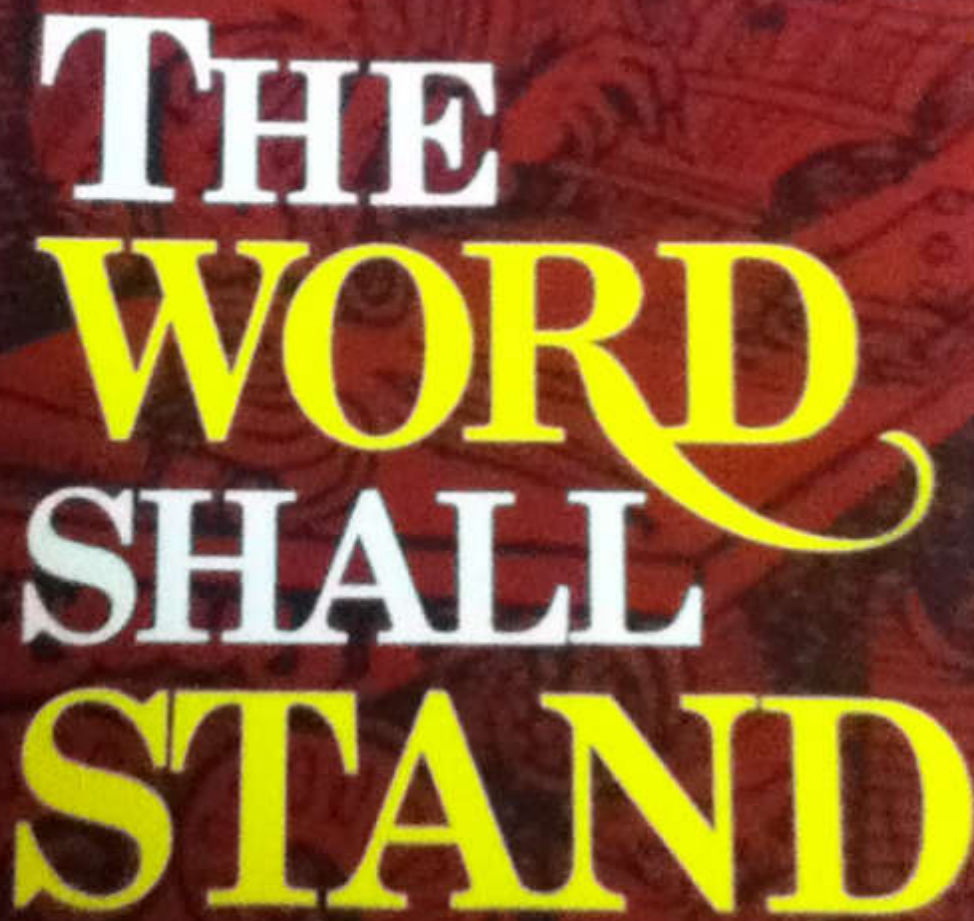


OUR EVANGELICAL  
LUTHERAN CONFESSION



**THE  
WORD  
SHALL  
STAND**

# THE WORD SHALL STAND

## OUR EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CONFESSION

The Word shall stand despite all foes. No thanks they for it merit-  
For God is with us, and bestows His gifts and Holy Spirit.  
And take they our life, Goods, fame, child, and wife:  
Though these all be gone, Yet have our foes not won;  
The kingdom ours remaineth.

A Mighty Fortress is Our God by Martin Luther (1483-1546)

*This work by*

MELVIN J. GRIEGER, VERNON S. GRIEGER, CLARENCE R. PRIEBBENOW

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## ***PREFACE***

Our Evangelical Lutheran Confession is addressed first of all to God. What we confess and declare in this document we confess in the presence of Almighty God and as before the judgment throne of our Lord Jesus Christ himself. We make this confession confidently believing that what we declare here is nothing new, but is the evident teaching of the Word of God revealed in the Holy Scriptures. God himself requires that we should acknowledge and confess this truth before men (Matthew 10:32-33).

This confession is also addressed to all our fellow confessors and supporters who in the unity of God's truth together make this confession. When a humble child of God sincerely believes that what is confessed in this document is nothing else than what God himself teaches explicitly or by necessary implication in the Scriptures, so that he would require us to confess this before men, then he also will happily endorse this confession, declaring it to be his very own.

Those who endorse this confession do so solemnly before the Lord of the church and all the world. All have a right to know who they are, and they have a right to know also where others stand. This confession is intended to assist committed Christians in making their position clear before God and the church. May Christ give us conviction and courage to confess him before men and he will also confess us before his Father in heaven.

In the confusion and turmoil of a church fractured by controversies and debates that may remain unresolved for years one cannot easily know who is who. One is unable to determine without a lot of searching enquiry, and certainly not as quickly as the practical circumstances may require, what a particular individual or pastor of our church may believe on this or that issue in debate. Often, in fact, it has been regarded as an unwelcome prying into a man's private affairs to request to know unequivocally what he believes on this or that specific issue. Officially such requests have also been frowned upon because they openly assume division in our church which would discredit the cherished facade of 'full doctrinal unity.'

But we believe that God's people are required to be quite open about their beliefs (1 Peter 3:15). Any reluctance or refusal to divulge what one believes on any matter of faith or Christian confession should justifiably be seen as a cause for suspicion that one has something to hide or to be ashamed of, because it may not be consistent with the revealed Word of God. Especially when calling a new pastor to their parish congregations are surely entitled to know, if not even in duty bound to find out, what the candidates for their call

believe in their heart of hearts on the spiritual and doctrinal issues that have been in controversy. Before the Lord our judge, who knows the true situation, we shall not in any way lend our support to a hypocritical facade of doctrinal unity in our church when we know differently.

This confession therefore is also addressed to all those who have opposed our confession of the truth, or who still do oppose the positions declared in it. Frequently, in debate and discussions in the controversies that have divided our church in the past, many of us were not given the opportunity to express at length and in clear detail the full content of our beliefs. We have sometimes been criticized therefore, either out of ignorance or unfairness, for holding to all sorts of narrow and foolish positions which we ourselves would emphatically reject. To these accusations and insinuations there has often been no opportunity for adequate reply. Accordingly, a clear confession is required in order to set the record straight so that everyone can see precisely what we believe, and so that false and uncharitable accusations and insinuations may be silenced and shown to be unfounded. In sincere love we earnestly ask all those who have opposed our position in previous controversies to study very carefully the biblical truths which we herein confess in all sincerity, and to recognize with us that this is nothing else but that which God himself teaches in his revealed Word, the Holy Scriptures. It is our earnest prayer that in this way there may be unity in his church.

Since it is our earnest desire too that men and women in all places and in all conditions should come to hear, understand and embrace the divine truths of the Word of God, this confession is addressed to the world around us. While we are fully aware that many of the things we confess here are foreign to, and unacceptable to the world about us, yet we are not ashamed of this our teaching and confession because we firmly believe that in every part it intends to set forth only what God himself tells us, and is fully consistent with his Word. This entire world owes its existence to the Lord God himself. God has revealed that all men, sooner or later, in heaven or hell, will have to acknowledge their Creator and the truth of his Word. The one Lord God of the universe calls all men to come to him through his Word. There are no secrets for a privileged elite in this Word of God. It is all open for the world to see. Believing that this confession is in complete harmony with this Word of God we invite everyone to examine the Scriptures to verify the positions that are herein confessed.

Finally, this confession is addressed to posterity, to those who follow after us in future generations. We want them to know clearly and precisely where we have stood on the issues that were in controversy in our church. If we truly believe that we are here confessing nothing else than what is taught in God's Word, then, as these matters are in dispute and the faithful confession is in danger of being compromised or submerged, we have not only the right, but also indeed the duty, to set forth our faith clearly in writing, so that it may be passed on without adulteration or compromise for future generations.

### **The Reason for a Confession**

If it is asked why we have resorted to the publication of a statement of confession, we wish it to be known that, finally we were driven to this, since no lesser action appeared to be responsible, or consistent with our sincere belief that the position for which we have been contending over the years is not merely our own, but in very truth God's own revelation, which we are required to defend and promote with our very lives.

When a church, through its theologians, will no longer openly and honestly face up to precise argumentation, when it will no longer evaluate carefully in the light of God's Word, either granting (and so also yielding to) its validity, or else effectively refuting and rejecting its anti-scriptural implications, then argument (in the sense of bringing cogent facts and information

from Scripture to bear on an issue for evaluation and judgment), is no longer profitable. It is like casting pearls before swine. When that point has been reached then discussion must give way to confession if we desire to remain faithful to God's Word. When arguments are no longer answered, then, in the absence of a clear confession, there can only be compromise or the ultimate acceptance of error. Neither of these are acceptable if we desire to adhere faithfully to God's truth.

Additional evidence that more of the same continuing debate and discussion would not be helpful to the church is the fact that the same false teachings - especially in the area of Scripture - have raised their ugly heads again and again, even after they had supposedly been laid to rest by some official 'statement' or 'consensus'. It should be evident that the reason for this is that the precise nature of the underlying errors was never openly identified and specifically rejected and condemned as contrary to the Word of God, and subsequently driven out of the church by evangelical discipline. On the contrary, errorists were, with only a few exceptions, never required to acknowledge, recant and reject their errors openly before the whole church. Rather, their errors were allowed to remain somewhat more hidden, concealed with fanciful interpretations.

While we certainly do not expect to have a church on earth in which there are no problems or controversies, yet we do expect the church to deal with errors responsibly by clearly exposing them as attacks upon the Word of God and quite unequivocally giving them no right of existence in the church. We believe that our church has performed very poorly in this regard, with the result that sound arguments have not produced the results that should have followed. This, now, makes a clear confession necessary.

Furthermore we have found that the very presentation of arguments is no longer understood by many of our opponents who appear to base their presentations upon a totally different world-view or philosophical presuppositions. The assumptions of existential philosophy or a 'dialectical view of truth' appear to underlie so much of their thinking and presentations. From that dialectical point of view Scripture and biblical statements and teachings appear to be filled with 'tensions' and contradictions which make everything relative and transitory ('dynamic') so that there is no longer anything fixed and stable ('static'), with the result that opposites can be 'true' at the same time and in the same relation. In such a situation of confusion and irrationality further debate would appear to be largely pointless. A clear and precise confession is called for.

Some have left the church because of this confused situation and have sought their fellowship elsewhere. Some have repeatedly urged a number of us to abandon a church in which such a situation is tolerated, pointing out that God's Word requires separation from errorists (Titus 3:10). We appreciate the sincerity of these people and their efforts to be faithful to God's will, and, indeed, the price they have paid to live consistently with their faith. But we believe that to separate from a church in a confused situation in which there are not only errorists but also very many who are endeavouring to be faithful to God's truth is not precisely the same as separating ourselves from false teachers. We have to bear the responsibilities of fellowship towards those who are faithfully contending for the truth and towards the many who, in their simplicity, 'know not anything' (2 Samuel 15:11). We intend to fulfil these responsibilities of fellowship by not abandoning those who are truly our brethren in the faith and are earnestly contending for the full truth of God's Word within the church. We are resolved to do this, despite our knowledge of our own personal weaknesses, with the prayer that by the grace of God we may not become weary with controversy and eventually remain silent. This is an ever-present danger to which we are all prone, and we earnestly pray for God's strength that

we may not yield to this temptation, to the intense satisfaction of Satan and of all who oppose God's Word.

At the same time, we must state quite clearly and categorically that we sincerely believe that we have no right, in the face of God's clear commands, to remain unequally yoked together with unbelievers. We must not, and we will not, hesitate to sever spiritual fellowship from a church body which knowingly, and in an on-going way allows its teachers to teach falsely in its name without rebuke. It may not always be immediately clear at what point the false teachings of errorists who are tolerated in the church do actually become the false teachings of the church body as a whole, but it is certainly clear that a church body becomes responsible for errors which it knowingly and willingly allows to continue without rebuke. Then division and separation are both called-for and God-pleasing (Romans 16:17-18).

### **The Name of This Confession**

The controversies in the church over the years have shown that there are at least two positions in the church on many issues. We sincerely believe that what we state in this confession is nothing else than the faith of our fathers clearly taught in the Scriptures. It is the true and universal Christian faith. But since false teachers have arisen who also claim that their erroneous positions are the universal faith, we are therefore driven to distinguish what we believe from their errors. This is Our Confession, then, in the sense that it identifies and unites us with all who have the true scriptural understanding of the universal faith in Christ.

Our Evangelical Lutheran Confession reaffirms and presupposes the doctrines contained in the Book of Concord of 1580. It is evangelical because it contains nothing but what is taught or implied in the Lutheran Confessions in the Book of Concord.

As has occurred repeatedly in history, the passing of time and the sharpening of issues in controversy make it necessary to set forth more precisely and in greater detail some matters that were previously taken for granted or understood in the church. Our confession is no more than this, so that we sincerely believe that we are setting forth here nothing new, but are simply stating the old evangelical, gospel-centred Christian faith set forth in the Lutheran Confessions in a way that comes to grips specifically with the modern denials and rejections of that faith.

It needs to be said in this connection that if we wish to confess the true Lord Jesus Christ faithfully, then we need to confess him especially in those points where his truth is being undermined today. Perhaps a most significant trend in satanic strategy and tactics in recent years has been to cause the true Gospel to be undermined, derided and rejected, not so much by blatant false teachings, but rather by a presentation of truth in such a way as to belittle it, and bring it into disrepute. The pure Gospel may be presented in a 'setting', or 'atmosphere' or mood (as with a sneer or a shrug of the shoulders), which causes it to be viewed with irreverence, with insincerity or contempt. These are very subtle denials of Christ, but not of a doctrinal nature.

If we wish to be faithful to our Lord today, then, our confession needs to come to grips with some denials also of such a nature. If, therefore, some matters in Our Confession do not appear to be strictly doctrinal (in the sense of the traditional confessions), then this is because we need to meet such modern denials in these less tangible areas.

With respect to the relationship of Our Confession to the Theses of Agreement (a basic doctrinal statement of the Lutheran Church of Australia) we declare that nothing in Our Evangelical Lutheran Confession is in conflict with the Theses of Agreement as we understand them and as they were originally presented to us.

We are aware of claims that the Theses of Agreement were intended to be a compromising and ambiguous document. Whatever may be the truth on this matter we acknowledge that various interpretations of the Theses of Agreement have been given which we must reject as contrary to Holy Scripture and which therefore are contradicted and condemned in Our Evangelical Lutheran Confession. The weakness of the Theses of Agreement, from the point of view of effectively maintaining unity in the church, we believe, is their failure to give clear and explicit rejections and condemnations of many present errors that oppose the truth. Positive statements on their own are more easily twisted than such as are supported by specific rejections and condemnations, as were so wisely provided in the Formula of Concord.

This document is a confession in the sense that it is intended to be a sincere, clear, and precise statement of what we believe on the issues that have been in controversy among us. It is given as before the throne of God. We believe in all sincerity that it is nothing else than the pure truth of God. It is, for this reason, not able to fracture and divide the church, but only to unite the true children of God more closely together in that one faith which unites us all in Christ Jesus. This is the purpose and intention of Our Evangelical Lutheran Confession.

We have presented the doctrine of Holy Scripture both positively and negatively in greater detail than any other doctrine because it has been the focus of a great deal of controversy in the church and because most other disagreements have arisen from a weakness in this area. It is important that the full implications of God's truth should be clearly set forth to meet the controversies that have divided us, so that it may be apparent who are faithful to God's truth (1 Corinthians 11:19).

We have found it necessary also to declare our beliefs with respect to various practical matters, not strictly doctrinal in themselves, but which have been debated in such a way as to undermine faithfulness to the truth of God.

Just as the proposed Augsburg Confession had to be expanded in the face of malicious slanders against the Lutherans when it was being asserted that they were denying many of the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith, so also, and for similar reasons, we have found it necessary to declare our position also with respect to other articles of the faith in which we are not aware of any dissension.

All of Our Evangelical Lutheran Confession is intended finally to focus upon our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God, that is, upon his person and work for our salvation. We present it therefore as nothing more, and nothing less, than our response to Jesus' question in Matthew 16:15 'But whom say ye that I am?' We say in essence: 'Thou art the Christ the Son of the Living God' (Matthew 16:16), and we believe that this has not been revealed to us by flesh and blood but by our Father in heaven through the Scriptures alone.

## Formal Issues

### THE SOURCE OF OUR FAITH

One of the most contentious issues in the short history of the Lutheran Church of Australia has been the doctrine of Holy Scripture. This is understandable because in Lutheran theology the Scriptures alone are to be the source and norm of all Christian doctrine.

If anyone would introduce new teachings into the church, or deny, question, or change any existing teachings, he would very soon find himself in opposition to the traditional Lutheran doctrine of the Scriptures. To the extent that he can deviate from the traditional teaching of

the church on Scripture, to that extent only will he be able to subvert or to change the teachings of the church in other areas of Christian doctrine.

Inevitably the root cause of changes in other doctrines of the church will be a departure from the true scriptural nature and authority of Scripture. It is of fundamental importance, therefore, that there should be clarity and scrupulous faithfulness in the church of God on this doctrine. Everything else will depend on it.

It is of great importance to confess clearly the relationship between Christ Jesus and the Scriptures. Christ Jesus is the incarnate Word of God ( *logos ensarkos* ), and Holy Scripture is the written Word ( *logos graptos* ). But they are both indissolubly linked together, so that, positively, the proclamation of Christ is the presentation of Scripture, and negatively, every attack upon Scripture is an attack upon Christ, the author of Scripture.

## Article 1

### THE CHRIST-CENTREDNESS OF SCRIPTURE

It was a most important insight of Dr. Martin Luther to recognize Christ Jesus as the very heart and centre of Holy Scripture. He expressed this in many ways, saying that Christ is the 'central point of the circle', around which everything else in the Bible revolves. He declared: 'I see nothing in Scripture except Christ and him crucified', or again: 'Every word in the Bible points to Christ'. He saw all Scripture as having been given for the sake of Christ in order that He might be made known and glorified. In him alone does it find its full meaning and intent. Because of this everything is to be understood with reference to him. 'Take Christ out of the Scriptures', Luther asked Erasmus, 'and what will you find remaining in them?' For the Scriptures contain 'Nothing but Christ and the Christian faith'.

We are determined to uphold and proclaim this important insight of Dr. Martin Luther by which the Scriptures have become an open book for all posterity.

There has been no argument concerning the fact of this matter, but there have been very differing views in our church on the implications of the Christ-centredness of Scripture. Some have held that the written Scriptures of the Old and the New Testaments are the Word of God because Christ is the thrust and centre of Scripture, as if the Word-of-God character of Scripture is somehow derived from its central content. Others have maintained that while Christ and his Gospel are certainly the central thrust and message of the Scriptures, yet the fact that Scripture is the Word of God is due to the divine authorship of Scripture rather than to its Christ-content. This matter, then, has a bearing on the very nature of Scripture itself and its use.

We can decide this issue, however, only from an examination of the way in which our Lord Jesus Christ himself and his apostles quote Scripture as the authoritative Word of God. Such an examination shows that never do our Lord or his apostles quote Scripture as the authoritative Word of God because it somehow presents Christ or the Gospel of salvation. On the contrary, they repeatedly refer to the Scriptures as the authoritative Word of God on the basis of the fact that God, the Lord, the Holy Spirit spoke those words. Divine authorship establishes divine authority: 'spoken of the Lord by the prophet' (Matthew 1:22-23; 2:15), 'Well spake the Holy Ghost' (Acts 28:25; Hebrews 3:7 cf. also Acts 4:25).



## **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess, therefore, that the central message and intent of Scripture is to prepare us for, and to proclaim, the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the salvation of sinners. Jesus Christ is the very heart and centre of all Scripture. We believe that all that Scripture has to say, not only on specifically spiritual matters of faith and life, but also on matters of history and geography and things of a scientific nature, or which convey other technical content, are part of the central thrust towards Jesus Christ and are intended by God as part of the overall purpose to draw us to our Saviour and to strengthen and equip us in faith in our Lord. This is so even though it may not be immediately apparent how, or in what way, it is so. We believe this on the basis of God's own revelation in Scripture: 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (2 Timothy 3:16); 'Search the scriptures... they are they which testify of me' (John 5:39).
2. We believe, teach, and confess that the Scriptures as the Word of God have Christ and his Gospel as their central message because that is the way that God himself inspired them. He caused the Scriptures to be written in this way in order to enable us, by them, to become wise unto salvation John 5:39; 'They are written for our admonition...' 1 Corinthians 10:11; 2 Timothy 2:15).
3. We believe, teach, and confess, therefore, that, because all of Scripture was inspired by God for our salvation, the proper use of Scripture requires that we accept every word of Scripture as intended for our salvation and earnestly strive to learn from it how, and in what way, even the minute details of Scripture may assist our faith and sanctification to the glory of God.
4. We believe, teach, and confess, however, that when it is rightly asserted that the Gospel is the central message of the Scriptures this is not intended to imply that it is the only message of the inspired Word of God in the sense that no other information can be derived from Scripture. The Scriptures do, in fact, present a great deal of information that is of value from purely historical, geographical, scientific or other technical points of view. To derive such information from Scripture is not an abuse of Scripture. But to derive only such information from Scripture while failing to perceive the Saviour and our salvation, to which purpose all of Scripture was intended, is not only a failure to benefit from God's central purpose in giving us his Word, but also ultimately it is to set oneself against the Lord of Scripture himself, for man is not able to take a neutral position of academic non-involvement when he is confronted with the Gospel of Christ (Matthew 12:30; Luke 11:23).

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn every failure to see and accept that Jesus Christ or his Gospel of our salvation is the central message and thrust of all canonical Scripture.
2. We reject and condemn every suggestion that the Christ-centredness of Scripture, or its gospel content, is that which makes it the Word of God, as if Scripture is God's Word not because he inspired it and authored the words of Scripture but because it sets forth Christ and the Gospel.
3. We reject and condemn the suggestion that any given words of Scripture could not be said to be the Word of God if they did not set forth Christ or our salvation even though they have been spoken by, or inspired by, God himself. For example, we

cannot accept that God is unable to speak, or to reveal by divine inspiration, any message or information that is not directly related to our salvation in Christ.

4. We reject and condemn, therefore, every attempt to use the central Christ-content of Scripture as a principle to grade or categorize passages of Scripture as being more or less divinely inspired, or having more or less divine authority, according as we judge them to set forth more or less explicitly the central message of Christ. This assumes the error that the more a passage teaches Christ the more authoritative it is.
5. We reject and condemn, as a very subtle refusal to believe in the full truthfulness of God's Word, the notion that to derive any other information from Scripture than that which can be shown to relate to Christ and our salvation is essentially an abuse of God's Word. We reject and condemn especially, therefore, every suggestion (as that presupposed by the slogan 'The Bible is no textbook of science'), that if information is derived from the Scriptures that relates to history and geography and the sciences, etc., it may not be true and factual or authoritative in those fields, while somehow that same information may nevertheless be authoritative and truthful in its function to point to Christ and the central message of the Gospel. Jesus said: 'If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?' John 3:12).

## Article 2

### THE FORMAL AND MATERIAL PRINCIPLES

For many years theologians in the church have spoken of the 'formal' and 'material' principles of a church or denomination. *Formal principle means that which a church body regards as its ultimate authority or source of doctrine or that by which doctrine and teaching are to be judged.* Naturally the formal principles of churches and denominations vary. Some, such as the Lutheran church, hold that Scripture alone is the ultimate authority or formal principle. Others vary from holy traditions to reason, Christian experience, and feeling. Where the formal principles of two parties are not identical true agreement is virtually impossible.

*Material principle means that which a particular church or body regards as the central substance of its message, or the very core of its faith.* For Lutherans the material principle is Christ or the doctrine of justification by God's grace for Christ's sake through faith. This is why this article of our faith has also been called the article by which the church stands or falls. Other churches believe in all sincerity that the central message of the Christian faith is something else. They see it as 'the greater glory of God', 'the sanctified sinner', 'the perfection of the Christian man', 'participation in the divine life', 'the Spirit-filled child of God', etc. Churches differ and have quite different approaches ultimately because they have differing material principles.

We agree that an analysis of church bodies on the basis of their formal and material principles is very useful and necessary, so that in no way would we like to disparage such a useful insight.

The term material principle, however, has some difficulties and has possibly caused considerable misunderstanding as far as the Lutheran Church's material principle is concerned. The problem seems to be related to the term 'principle'. A principle may be seen as a starting point or a beginning. That is a fundamental assumption or teaching from which other teachings may be derived or deduced.

In the case of the formal principle, Scripture alone is the principle from which all teaching and doctrine must be derived. Scripture is the only source and norm of all matters of doctrine, faith, and life of the Lutheran Church. The material principle, however, - the doctrine of justification - is not a principle in the sense that other doctrines can be legitimately derived from it. That is precisely what has led to a great deal of confusion in the church when people assumed that they might derive or draw out doctrines from the doctrine of justification. This leads to 'gospel reductionism', where finally only such doctrines are considered to be valid or important in the church as flow from, or are derived from, the Gospel of justification by grace. In this way some have had no use for the Law because it cannot be derived from the Gospel. Others have denied the doctrine of hell because it appears to be contrary to the Gospel of God's love; and others again see no objection to the ordination of women into the ministry because it in no way appears to militate against the central article of justification.

Because of the confusion that this has caused here and there in the church we would prefer not to speak of the material principle of the Lutheran Church at all. It is important, however, that our confession should be intelligible to those who are used to speaking of the material principle in the proper and legitimate way. To achieve this we shall try to avoid the terms material principle on the one hand, and formal principle on the other hand, in this article. For the concept, *material principle*, on the one hand, we shall use such terms as: doctrine of justification, Christ, central teaching, or the Gospel, and for the concept, *formal principle*, on the other hand, we shall use such expressions as: the Scriptures, the authority of the Scriptures, the source of our faith etc. These expressions, then, will appear in italics. By this it should be understood that the legitimate concepts of material principle and formal principle are meant.

We assert that the two central insights of the Lutheran Reformation: The *sola scriptura* (Scripture Alone), and the *solus christus* or *sola gratia* (Christ Alone or Grace Alone), are not in, and must not be brought into, opposition with one another. In the church today it is impossible to have one without the other: either Christ without the Scriptures, or the Scriptures without Christ. Any attempt, therefore, to emphasize one at the expense of the other is fundamentally mistaken and must have tragic consequences for the entire Christian faith and life. The two must be distinguished: Christ is not the Scriptures, and the Scriptures are not Christ; but they must not be opposed.

Christ and the Gospel, of course, logically precede the Scriptures, and not vice versa. The Scriptures are the inspired words of God by which God has revealed his will, and the Gospel of his Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to man.

In 1 Corinthians 11:3 Scripture indicates a logical progression of authority or headship: 'Now I want you to realise that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God' (N.I.V). We might say that the logical progression of authority by which we are offered the truths that God would communicate to us are: God - Christ - the Holy Spirit - and the written words of Scripture. Christ received the Word from the Father and communicated it to his hearers (John 8:26; 12:49; 14:10). Jesus affirmed that after his departure the Holy Spirit would bring these same words of Jesus back to the minds of the disciples (John 14:25-26; 15:26). The apostles in turn would communicate these words to others (John 15:26-27). Their witness is, therefore, the authoritative Word of God to the world - the very words of Jesus, 'He that heareth you heareth me...' (Luke 10:16).

Since the departure of Christ's apostles we today have no authoritative revelation of God to his church, other than the inspired writings in the Scriptures (John 17:20). In this way God's revelation passes from the Father, Christ, the Holy Spirit, through the apostles in Scripture, to us (cf. Revelation 1:1).

Faith in God takes place in reverse procedure. The words of Scripture communicate the words or message of God's Law and Gospel. The Holy Spirit, who breathed these words in the first place (2 Timothy 3:16) speaks today through the same Scriptures, and creates in us faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour (cf. Luther's explanation to the third article of the Creed, also John 6:44-45). In this way, through Christ Jesus and his Word we come to the Father (John 14:6).

The scriptural relationship, then, between God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit and our faith, must be upheld for the sake of our salvation. We are determined to honour the Scriptures by faithful obedience to, and worship of, our Lord Jesus Christ. We must therefore reject and condemn every attempt either to confuse the roles of Christ and the Scriptures, or to exalt one at the expense of the other.

Some in the church have spoken in such a way as to imply that the authority of the Scriptures is limited to, or even restricted to, its gospel content or 'thrust towards Christ'. Others see such a position as sacrificing the *authority of Scripture* to its *central message* (Christ), and call it 'gospel reductionism'.

When they asserted that the Scriptures are authoritative because they are the divinely inspired words of God, and not just because of their gospel content, they have been accused of 'biblicism' or sacrificing the *Gospel* (Christ) *for the Scriptures* or worshipping a Book, having a 'paper pope', or being Fundamentalists.

The disagreement, then, is about the precise relationship between Christ (the material principle) and Scripture (the formal principle). How are they to be related so that they are not brought into conflict with each another?

## **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that true, biblical theology recognizes, and must bow in absolute submission to, two major authorities or insights, namely Christ and Scripture. As authorities these are, in fact, only different aspects of what is ultimately the same thing. But they must be distinguished from each other, for the one is not the other. But Christ, the Second person of the holy Trinity is God equal to the Father, possessing absolute authority (John 5:23; Philippians 2:9-11). Christ's authority cannot be compromised or limited in any way by anything. What Christ has done for our salvation (our atonement) is an eternally valid occurrence (Revelation 13:8) which has the power or authority to command acceptance (faith) and to shape and determine our lives. The Gospel, the Good News ( *euangelion* ) is simply God's revelation of Christ and his atonement and work for our salvation. This revelation is true, authoritative and effective beyond question. *The Scriptures* , on the other hand, possess absolute authority because they are the Spirit-breathed writing through which God, via the holy writers, in human language, and in propositional statements intelligible to the human mind, has revealed to us the truths and factual information that he chose to give us for our salvation and Christian life (2 Timothy 3:16-17). By 'authority' here we mean the right or capacity to command obedience and subjection to its final judgment and decision.
2. We believe, teach, and confess that *Scripture* and *the doctrine of justification* affirm and support each other ('they testify of me...' John 5:39) so that it is a grievous error to bring them into opposition to each other. Whatever is taught or implied in the Scriptures cannot possibly negate, contradict or undermine the Gospel in any way; and whatever, on the other hand, truly and genuinely belongs to the Gospel cannot contradict, negate, or undermine anything that is truly scriptural.

3. We believe, teach, and confess that only by faith in the Gospel can we really come to accept the Scriptures as the very Word of God and understand rightly their message. ( *Theses of Agreement VIII, 5*). It may be said that in this sense faith in *Christ or the Gospel* logically precedes faith in the *Scriptures* . The Gospel is the power that is the cause of our faith (Romans 1:16) in the Scriptures. This is sometimes referred to as the causative authority of the Gospel. Accordingly, our view of the Bible is the result of our faith in the Gospel of Christ. Our faith in Christ ( *fides qua creditur* ) is not created in us by first adopting a particular view of the Bible. On the other hand, our understanding of the faith ( *fides quae creditur* ) is very much determined by our attitude to the Bible.
4. We believe, teach, and confess that the truth of the Gospel is prior to the Scriptures so that truth is not dependent upon its being revealed to us in the Scriptures. Christ and the Gospel is truth before and without God's revelation in the Scriptures (John 14:6).
5. We believe, teach, and confess, however, that we, today, can know what the true Gospel is, and who the true Lord Jesus Christ is, only from God's authoritative revelation in the Scriptures. For us today, therefore, the *Scriptures* are the only norm of the *Gospel* , so that all views about the Gospel must be derived only from, and proved only by, the Scriptures. Because the Gospel cannot now be known without God's revelation of it in the Scriptures, any views of the Gospel which are not established by the authority of Scripture are not of the one and only true Gospel, but they are a false gospel cursed by God (Galatians 1:6-8). To us, then, *Christ and the Gospel* are available now only through the *Scriptures* so that we cannot affirm the Gospel except on the authority of the Scriptures. This is not to exalt the Scriptures above Christ, but merely to acknowledge and distinguish their proper roles.
6. We believe, teach, and confess that the Gospel has normative authority in the Scriptures. By this we mean that, since the Gospel of Christ's atonement is the very heart and centre of all Scripture, therefore no passage of Scripture dare be interpreted in such a way as to bring it into conflict with Christ or the chief article of the Christian faith as revealed in the Scriptures (the analogy of faith). Scripture cannot be in conflict with its own heart and centre. In this way the Gospel acts as a brake, or negative limitation upon false human interpretations of Scripture. It tells us how a passage may not be understood, even though it does not tell us precisely how a passage must be understood.
7. We believe, teach, and confess that as the church proves the correctness of its gospel teaching from the Scriptures alone, so also it proves the correctness of all other teachings from the Scriptures alone, and not, somehow, from the Gospel ( *Theses of Agreement VIII, 1*). This means that the *Scriptures alone* and not the *Gospel* are the sole norm and standard according to which all teachings, together with all teachers in the church, should be estimated and judged ( *Formula of Concord, The Summary, Content, Rule and Standard, Triglotta p.777*). As God's own inspired words, the Scriptures are God's authoritative rule and norm of all that his church teaches and does in his name.
8. We believe, teach, and confess that, as the church derives the Gospel of Christ's atonement and our salvation only from the Scriptures, so also it derives all other teaching or doctrine only from the Scriptures, and not from the Gospel or from what the Gospel is thought to imply.

9. When we declare that the Scriptures are the norm or authority of the Gospel we mean simply that the content of the Gospel and the way in which it is to be expressed must be taken from, and judged by, the Scriptures.
10. We believe, teach, and confess that while the Gospel itself is the effective power ('causative authority') that instils faith (*fi des qua creditur*) in the Saviour, yet the Scriptures alone are the normative authority, which establishes, and regulates, or judges the proper statement and confession of the Christian faith (*fi des quae creditur*).

## NEGATIVE

1. We reject and condemn, as a most destructive error that cuts directly at the very foundation of the Christian faith, any and every attempt to bring *the authority of the Scriptures* and *the Gospel* into conflict with each other by employing them outside of their proper God-given roles. This is done when it is held that we must first accept the Scriptures as God's inspired and inerrant Word before we can believe in Christ, and that then, as a consequence of this view of the Scriptures, we will accept Christ Jesus as our Saviour. This is done also when the Gospel is used as a principle of interpretation over the Scriptures in such a way that it determines not only, negatively, what a passage cannot mean (namely, that it cannot be contrary to the Gospel), but also positively, what a passage must mean, and, so, in this way, the Gospel may be used to set aside, abrogate, or diminish, all law, and thus to alter God's holy, immutable will or what he prescribes in his Word, to become something less demanding under the 'freedom of the gospel'. This is done also when the normative authority of the Scriptures is made to depend upon the Gospel, so that the Gospel becomes the norm of all theology and Christian teaching, as if all other teachings of Scripture are to be in some way derived from the Gospel, and that, therefore, a clear teaching of Scripture may be set aside or disregarded as having no authority unless it can be shown that, in some way, it is derived from, or validated by, the Gospel. This again makes the Gospel into a source and norm of doctrine (*Theses of Agreement VIII, 1*).
2. We therefore reject and condemn, as a fundamental rejection of the *sola scriptura* principle every demand that clear teachings of Scripture be shown to be related to the Gospel in some way before they can be held to be important or authoritative for us; and every assertion that the more closely Scripture teachings are related to the Gospel the more authority they possess.
3. Similarly, we reject and condemn every attempt to use the Gospel as a kind of 'test for canonicity' to be applied to passages within the accepted Scriptures or to books within our present Bibles. The question of the canon of Scripture is a historical question. The Gospel cannot be used as an authority to set up a canon within the canon.

## Article 3

### THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

We have seen that there is no contradiction between ascribing absolute authority to Christ and ascribing absolute authority to the Scriptures. Scripture has divine authority precisely because it is the Word and revelation of God himself. By 'authority' here we mean the inherent right, capacity or power to command obedience, acceptance and subjection to its will and submission to its final judgment and decision. Whatever is the Word, the communication, or revelation of God, has the authority of God himself, who is ultimate authority. It cannot meaningfully be said that something is the Word or revelation of God but yet has no authority.

There has been considerable confusion in the church on the matter of the authority of the Old Testament with its various laws and regulations as well as the authority of many of the New Testament regulations. Some have maintained that these are of no authority for us today. While they are willing to concede that the Old Testament is properly to be called the Word of God, yet, in practice, they do not regard it as possessing divine authority in the same sense as we have defined it. It is frequently assumed that it was the primitive situation, or the special conditions, in which the Old Testament was given, which limits its authority.

This false theological position, then, carries over into the New Testament and the same arguments are used to limit the authority of New Testament passages to the very circumscribed conditions in which they were given at that time. With this false presupposition, then, theologians have postulated many differing and contradictory theologies in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, presumptuously stating that the theology of Paul contradicts the theology of Peter or Luke, etc. While all of the Old Testament and the New Testament is somehow still conceded to be the Word of God, yet it is accorded no absolute and universal authority either for the time it was written or for today. It is presumed, then, on this basis, that we have to formulate our own theology for our own times.

Others in the church have regarded this as a failure to perceive the very meaning and nature of biblical authority, and as a most destructive and dangerous confusion, which, in principle, undermines all divine authority in Scripture, and which promotes a spirit of theological anarchy, which abolishes the Law in the church, so that all confession of Scripture as the Word of God is little more than a formality. Still others in the past have tried to impose all sorts of rules and regulations which God gave to Israel in the Old Testament, as if they were binding upon his Christian congregations today.

It is vitally important for the peace and unity of the church, therefore, that these matters should be resolved in humble obedience to God's Word, for upon our understanding of this matter will depend the very sense in which we mean to confess that Scripture is the Word of God. Any confession of Scripture as 'the Word of God' without agreement in this matter is a deception.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that since our Lord Jesus Christ and his apostles spoke of, and referred to, the Scriptures always and only with the utmost respect, acknowledging them to be the authoritative Word of God and the final authority to which we must all be subject, therefore it is the duty of the church today also to insist upon the same divine authority of Scripture without equivocation (Matthew 5:17-18; 22:42-44; John 10:35; Romans 9:17; Galatians 3:8). The holy writers repeatedly refer

to the Scriptures as God's directing and instructing us with divine authority (Matthew 1:23; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 1:1).

2. We believe, teach, and confess that the authority of Scripture lies in God himself, and that Scripture possesses its authority or capacity to demand our obedience and acceptance precisely because it is God himself who is speaking to us in Scripture and revealing to us information for our acceptance.
3. We believe, teach, and confess that divine revelation necessarily involves divine authority. What God reveals to us commands our acceptance. Scripture as divine revelation possesses that divine authority whether men perceive it or not. If, because of our weakness, or because of our inability to understand the language, we cannot grasp the content or precise message of a passage of Scripture, then, obviously, it reveals nothing to us. That passage of Scripture, however, remains authoritative in itself, as the Word of God, even though we may not have grasped its meaning. Its legitimate claim upon our acceptance and obedience is not affected by our inability to understand, even though our personal appreciation of that authority may be lacking. In this way some passages may appear to be very clear to us and other passages may not be as clear, or they may even be dark and difficult for us to understand. While they all possess divine authority, yet, as they do not effectively reveal anything to us, we have no way of appreciating their authority.
4. We believe, teach, and confess, therefore, that, when we assess the weight of authority in various Scripture passages in regard to a particular issue, we are not to imagine that some passages are inherently more authoritative and some less authoritative, but that in our judgment their equal divine authority applies more or less directly to the particular issue in question.
5. We believe, teach, and confess that the authority of every passage of Scripture applies only to God's intended meaning of that passage. It is most important, therefore, to understand, from the text itself, what the passage of Scripture is referring to, and to whom God is speaking, in order that we may correctly perceive the intended scope and application of that divine authority. Any attempt, either, on the one hand, to apply the authority of a passage or command of God more widely and beyond what God intended, or, on the other hand, to limit and restrict the application of that word more narrowly than God intended, is a serious interference with divine authority. It is not merely the situations or circumstances, therefore in which a particular word or command of God is given that determines the scope of its application, but rather the intention of God. We will discover the intention of God in the context of that passage and in the Scriptures generally. In this way we will find that many commandments of God to his people in the Old Testament and elsewhere do not bind and restrict us today, not because they are in the Old Testament (as if it no longer has authority), nor because they were given to the Jews, nor because they were given in so-called primitive and unenlightened times (as if that could limit the authority of God's Word), but because God's Word itself indicates the limited intention of God in those passages of his Word. We may not arbitrarily limit the scope of the divine authority of any passage, but must be guided only by the divine intention revealed in the passage itself. Scripture alone interprets Scripture.
6. We believe, teach, and confess that every passage of Scripture possesses the same divine authority because it is God's Word regardless of what subject it may be speaking of ( *Theses of Agreement* VIII, 7).



7. We declare, therefore, that to be disobedient to Scripture either in not obeying its commands or in not accepting its teachings as the final arbiter in all matters of which it speaks, is the same thing as being disobedient to, and in rebellion against, the Triune God himself.
8. We confess the authority of God's Word in every part and every passage of Scripture, so that, provided passages of Scripture are not cited out of context but in harmony with their intended meaning, they may be quoted as 'proof texts' to bring to bear the divine authority of God himself upon a specific matter. This was the practice of Christ and the apostles (Matthew 4:4-10; 19:3-6; Luke 24:25-27), of Luther, and the Lutheran Confessions, and also of the *Theses of Agreement* everyone knows. In fact, the Lutheran Confessions regard it as 'rash' or as 'extreme impudence' to affirm something that passages of Scripture do not say, or without proof from Scripture passages (cf. *Apology* XII,138, 157; XXI, 10; XXIII, 63; XXVII, 23).
9. We believe that because the one author, God, inspired the whole of Scripture in all its parts and words ( *Theses of Agreement* VIII, 7), therefore Scripture will present a consistent theological position with divine authority.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn as an insult to God, the author of Scripture, any attempt to distinguish between passages of Scripture which are authoritative and those which are not, or to regard the Old Testament as possessing no authority today.
2. We reject and condemn any attempt to discredit the authority of any passage because of the human environment in which it was given, or because of man's inability to grasp its meaning, or to achieve unanimity in the understanding of its content.
3. We reject and condemn all talk of grades of authority in the canonical books of Scripture on the basis of subject matter, as if the more a passage presents Christ the more authoritative it is, or as if the more closely it is related to the Gospel the more authoritative it becomes.
4. We reject and condemn, as an irresponsible abuse of the divinely authoritative Word, every application of Scripture in a way that is contrary to its intended meaning. To limit and restrict the application of God's authority in passages of Scripture to a scope less than God intended is just as evil as to apply the authority of a passage beyond, and wider than, what God intended. On the one hand we reject and condemn the simplistic application of all God's commands to individuals, groups, or nations of people in the past as being applicable and binding upon us today. By that folly the Word of God is brought into disrepute, Christian freedom is restricted, and we are logically all required, like Hosea , to take a harlot to be our wife (Hosea 1:2), or like the Israelites to offer animal sacrifices and to observe the Sabbath (Exodus 20:2, 8-11). On the other hand we reject and condemn also every illicit and subtle limitation of the authority and application of Scripture in the Old and New Testaments to the particular times or circumstances in which they were given so as to enable the church today to fit in more closely with the trends of modern society.
5. We reject and condemn every attempt to apply the authority of Scripture indiscriminately and arbitrarily by tearing passages out of their context and applying them contrary to their intended meaning.

6. Similarly we reject the procedure of many theologians today who assign to passages of Scripture various genres or literary styles and by this procedure would discredit or limit the authority of those passages as the authoritative Word of God.
7. We reject and condemn every attempt to discourage people from quoting individual passages of Scripture as 'proof texts', as if a passage loses all of its authority once it is separated from its immediate context.
8. We reject and condemn, as a repudiation of the fundamental unity and divine authority of Scripture, every suggestion that we can find different and contradictory 'theologies' in Scripture, when by this it is meant that there is an inconsistent, and even contradictory, application of theological principles by different apostles and evangelists in the New Testament, even though they are all inspired by the same Holy Spirit. We reject root and branch not merely the modern situational ethics but also the modern situational theology.

## Article 4

### THE DIVINE AND HUMAN NATURES OF SCRIPTURE

An area in which there has been a great deal of confusion in our church over the years and which has spawned much argument is the so called 'human side' and 'divine side' of Scripture. Those who allow for all sorts of errors, contradictions, and irreconcilable discrepancies in the Scriptures used the so-called 'human side' of Scripture to support their position. Since it is human to err and to make mistakes, it was considered a denial of the 'human side' of Scripture to teach any genuine inerrancy of the Bible. They labelled this docetism, as if it were tantamount to denying the human nature of Christ. Any harmonization of apparent contradictions in the Scriptures too was considered to be a refusal to recognize the human side of Scripture. When the divine side of Scripture was said to necessitate an inerrant Word of God, then it was argued that God in his grace accommodated himself to human characteristics such as fallibility or liability to err.

Others adamantly refused to accept this compromise with errorists. Never do the Scriptures anywhere teach that God's Word contains errors. On the contrary, God's Word is truth (John 17:17). Room for errors should not, therefore, be introduced into the Scriptures under the adage 'To err is human'. Concerning the analogy of the human nature of Jesus it was pointed out also that God took the human nature into his own person in Christ 'yet without sin', as Scripture says (Hebrews 4:15).

We are all agreed that there is, properly speaking, a human and a divine character in Scripture. Every word of Scripture is at the same time both human and divine. It is the Word of God in and through the words of men, using human language, logic and imagery. But the point of the controversy has been whether the natural limitations of the human mind, especially the liability to err and to make mistakes, came through into the written Word itself. To this some have said yes and others have said no.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that, when the Scriptures say: 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God' (2 Timothy 3:16), it is thereby specifically stated that all the writing of God's Word has a divine character. That it is written in human language implies also that it has a human character. Every word of Scripture, therefore, should be seen to be both human and divine, or the Word of God in and through the words of

men. The words are both God's words and men's words. No attempt, therefore, dare be made to separate and distinguish what is the word of men in the Scriptures from what is the Word of God.

2. For this reason it must also be acknowledged that, in each and every part of Scripture, whatever is said about the human character of Scripture is said also about the divine character of Scripture and *vice versa* .
3. We believe, teach, and confess, therefore, that when the Scriptures ascribe to themselves the qualities of perfection, authority, sufficiency, and inerrancy, etc., these qualities apply, not only to the divine character of Scripture, but also to the human character (cf. *Theses of Agreement VIII,10*). Similarly one cannot ascribe all sorts of errors and discrepancies to the human character of Scripture without at the same time ascribing these to the divine character. We believe that none of the natural limitations which belong to the human mind, even under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, can impair the authority of the Bible or the inerrancy of God's Word ( *Theses of Agreement VIII, 10*).
4. We believe, teach, and confess that it is most important to adhere to the fact that every word of Scripture is fully human, because only in this way can it be God's revelation to us. Only by speaking to us in human language that employs human words, human concepts, grammar, and logical relationships, understandable by the human mind, can God convey to us through our minds and intellects what he would have us know. We believe that the rational human mind (as a servant under the Word but not a master over it) is taken for granted as the God-given means whereby man understands divine revelation. Revelation truly reveals information in a way that can be understood.
5. We believe, teach, and confess that it is most important to adhere to the fact that every word of Scripture is also thoroughly divine. It has its ultimate origin in the mind of God himself. We are to listen to Scripture, therefore, as if these words fell from the lips of God himself, for they were inspired by God (2 Timothy 3:16). They are therefore also owned by him. The divine authority of the words of Scripture rests upon the fact that these words are thoroughly divine.

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn, as a most dangerous error, the position that some passages and words of Scripture are divine, and others human, or that in some passages the human character is more dominant than the divine character of Scripture, or *vice versa* .
2. We reject and condemn in the same way every suggestion that while such attributes as perfection, holiness, infallibility, truthfulness, and inerrancy may be properly ascribed to the Bible because it is the Word of God, yet, because it is a human book, with obvious human features, these attributes of perfection, truth, inerrancy, etc., must mean something else when applied to the Scriptures than what they ordinarily imply.
3. We reject and condemn, as a most dangerous error which potentially undermines the authority of all Scripture, the theory that human fallibility, or human liability to err and to make mistakes - to which also the holy writers were prone - actually came through into the writing ( *graphie* , 2 Timothy 3:16) of Scripture itself, or the written words in such a way as to limit or undermine the complete inerrancy of any word of Scripture. The result is that, allegedly, the written word is subject to errors and contradictions in its human character, either in its statements about earthly facts or in its spiritual teachings.

4. We reject, as contrary to sound teaching and appropriate presentation, the tendency of theologians of our day to emphasize human sinfulness, fallibility, and liability to err in the sacred writers in connection with their writing of Scripture. This is not the way in which the Scriptures speak of these men. Both the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, on the contrary, emphasize, rather, the holiness of the writers and their adherence to God's will as they wrote and spoke the words of God (2 Peter 1:19-21).
5. We reject and condemn charges of docetism made by theologians against those who have attempted to offer harmonisations of seemingly contradictory passages of Scripture, as if this were somehow an illegitimate exercise, attempting to do away with the human character of Scripture, and as if the presence of errors and contradictions in Scripture is a necessary part of its human character.
6. We reject and condemn the suggestion that those who subscribe to the perfection, infallibility, and inerrancy of the Scriptures are held to be motivated by a millennialistic spirit or a theology of glory, rather than a theology of the cross.
7. In the comparison between the human and divine character of the Scriptures (the written Word of God) and the human and divine natures of Christ (the personal Word, John 1:14) we reject and condemn any suggestion that the humanity of Christ implies the sinfulness of his human nature, or that the humanity of the Scriptures implies the fallibility of its words or their liability to err. This is based upon the heresy, rejected in the first article of the *Formula of Concord*, that sin and error are an essential part of human nature itself, rather than a corruption of that nature.
8. We reject and condemn, as an essentially dangerous denial of the human character of Scripture, any attempt to play down or to bypass the ministerial use of the human mind and reason in understanding divine revelation. By holding in contempt, or setting aside, the God-given means of the human mind, with reason, logic, and the ability humbly to receive revelation from God in Scripture, opportunity, or place (Ephesians 4:27) is given to the devil to provide other means of receiving 'truth'. This is a dangerous error of the Enthusiasts and Charismatics today.
9. We reject and condemn every effort to exalt the human character of Scripture at the expense of the divine because it makes the authority of Scripture subject to human judgment and criticism. This is the great error of our times, against which the true and faithful church of God must earnestly contend, lest the Word of God be taken away from us, and we be left with a mere skeleton of God's revelation.

## Article 5

### THE INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

The nature, meaning, and extent of divine inspiration have been vitally involved in the controversies of the church for some time. This is evident from the fact that, while some gladly accept the divine inspiration of every word of canonical Scripture as having come by the unique working of the Holy Spirit, yet others have spoken and written disparagingly of such a view of inspiration as being a Jewish, medieval, and unbiblical concept, and have maintained that inspiration somehow has no bearing upon biblical authority, and plays no decisive role in our view of the Scriptures at all.

The point of controversy among us, then, is not the fact of divine inspiration of Scripture, but rather the nature, meaning, extent, and implications of divine inspiration.

## AFFIRMATIVE

1. We believe, teach, and confess on the basis of what Scripture says about itself ('All scripture is given by inspiration of God' 2 Timothy 3:16) that every word of the canonical Scriptures is 'God-breathed'. The Scriptures as a whole, and in all individual passages, and in every word, therefore, are the inspired words of God ( *Theses of Agreement* VIII, 7).
2. We declare that we mean by 'inspiration' what the Scriptures themselves state, namely that the Holy Spirit of God himself in some way breathed ( *theopneustos* , 2 Timothy 3:16) the very words which the holy writers wrote, so that, by this action of the Holy Spirit, the very thoughts and words which the holy writers committed to writing ( *graphe* ), are in fact God's very own words as if they had fallen from the lips of God himself ( *Apology* IV, 107-108; *Triglotta* p.153). Divine inspiration affirms divine origin, or it is meaningless. Scripture is God's Word because it was given by God.
3. We believe that the Holy Spirit's act of inspiration was a unique action, that is, one which is different in kind from what is implied by other usages of the term 'inspiration' today ( *Theses of Agreement* VIII, 6).
4. While it may correctly be said that the Word of God is inspiring - meaning that it touches and uplifts us with God's Spirit - yet this is not what we confess by the term 'divine inspiration'. Rather, by it we confess that God is the author of Scripture, so that he gave his words to and through men for us all.
5. We believe, teach, and confess that in this act of inspiration God did not suppress the individual personality of his sacred writers, but rather made use of their individual styles and personalities. Sometimes God spoke directly through the prophets in such a way that they themselves were not conscious of the full implications of what they wrote (1 Peter 1:10-12). At other times God used the careful research of the sacred writers (Luke 1:1-4). We do not presume to analyse or to set out precisely how and in what manner God caused the holy men of God (2 Peter 1:19-21) to write his Word. That miracle is a mystery to us as all other miracles are. We do insist, however, that the final product, the written material, the Scriptures ( *graphai* 2 Timothy 3:16), which resulted from this unique action of inspiration, are truly God- breathed ( *theopneustos* 2 Timothy 3:16; *Theses of Agreement* VIII, 6). They came from, or were supplied by, God himself, and are therefore his Word.
6. We affirm, therefore, that inspiration, in its proper and original sense, applies to the original writings of the sacred Scriptures and not to inaccurate copies or translations of Scripture ( *Theses of Agreement* VIII, 10). To ascribe divine inspiration in the same sense to erroneous copies, and inaccurate translations of the original writings, is to abuse the term 'inspiration' and to undermine the Word of God.
7. We confess that copies of the original inspired manuscripts and the translations of these copies into other languages are 'inspired' in a secondary sense in so far as, and to the extent that, they are faithful to the original manuscripts. For this reason the work of sound textual evaluation, as well as accuracy of translation, is of great theological importance to the church, and not merely of archaeological interest.
8. We believe that it is proper, and in accord with the teaching of Scripture, to speak of the Holy Spirit's giving a divine impulse to write his Word (2 Peter 1:19-21). The object of divine inspiration, according to 2 Timothy 3:16, was not the writers, but the writings ( *graphai* ) that resulted. The object of the Holy Spirit's impulse to write, on

the other hand, was the holy writers. The full process is, then, described in Scripture as involving both divine inspiration and divine impulse or motivation.

9. We believe, teach, and confess, therefore, that the Scriptures are both God's *WORD*, (referring to the central core of Scripture) and God's words, because God gave those words by his unique act of inspiration through the holy writers whom he moved to commit them to writing.

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn, as contrary to sound doctrine, every suggestion that only some and not all, parts of Scripture are inspired, or that the main and central thrust of Scripture (the Gospel) is inspired, rather than every detail of what the Scriptures say also about historical, geographical and other earthly matters.
2. We reject and condemn, as contrary to sound doctrine, the suggestion that Scripture is inspired, not in the sense that the words of Scripture are 'God-breathed' (*theopneustos*) through the holy writers, but in the sense that the Word of God breathes or radiates the Spirit of God, or is in some other sense filled with God's Spirit (*Theses of Agreement VIII, 6*).
3. We reject and condemn all attempts to put the inspiration of Scripture on the same level as the inspiration of works of art today, as if the inspiration of Scripture were not the unique action of God (*Theses of Agreement VIII, 6*).
4. We repudiate all purely mechanical explanations of divine inspiration, as if God simply used the sacred writers as unconscious and impersonal typewriters or machines, so that he did not make use of their personalities or their individual styles and manners. We reject, however, any suggestion that it was the persons, rather than the writings (*graphai* 2 Timothy 3:16), that were the objects of divine inspiration.
5. We reject the application of the term 'inspired' to the defective and erroneous copies and translations of the Scriptures, when it is asserted that they were inspired in the same sense as, and to the same extent as, the original manuscripts.
6. We reject, either as confused or deceitful, the use of the term 'inspired' when it is applied to modern writings and sermons that clearly present the Gospel, meaning that these writings are inspired in the same sense as the Scriptures, thereby denying the unique action of God.
7. We reject and condemn, as an insult to the Holy Spirit, all attempts to trace the origin of the concept of inspiration to Greek and Jewish secular and pagan sources. This again denies that the inspiration of Scripture was a unique act of God.
8. We reject and condemn as blasphemous the suggestion that Christ and his apostles simply took over pagan and Jewish unbiblical views of inspiration that are unworthy and inadequate (cf. *Doctrinal Statements*, Genesis 1-3 rejection d, B2 bottom).
9. We reject and condemn all new definitions of the term 'inspiration' that would emphasize, not the divine origin of Scripture as the Word of God, but, rather, its power or present action and witness to Christ.
10. We reject the use of 1 Corinthians 12:3, 'No one can say that Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit', as an adequate source of the doctrine of the divine inspiration of Scripture, because it is not speaking about the unique action of the Holy Spirit by which the holy men of God spoke and wrote the Word of God by divine inspiration (*Theses of Agreement VIII, 6*).

11. We reject and condemn the statement that Scripture is God's Word *because* it presents Christ, when this is intended to convey the notion that the gospel content of any statement of Scripture is that which makes it the Word of God. Such a notion rests on the false presupposition that God can, or does, speak only the Gospel to us, whereas, in reality, of course, anything and everything that God says, on whatever subject he chooses to speak, is the very Word of God.

## Article 6

### THE INERRANCY OF SCRIPTURE

The practical meaning of our confession of the doctrine of Scripture will be seen in the way we handle and use the Scriptures. If there are departures from the truth in any aspect of the doctrine of Scripture they will show up very quickly in the area of biblical inerrancy. Our church has experienced a great deal of conflict on this matter.

The term inerrant with reference to Scripture is enshrined in the unalterable clauses of the constitution of our church. Nevertheless, many do not like the term, and while they have declared that they are opposed to the word inerrant itself rather than what it is supposed to mean, yet in their writings they speak of slight errors and peripheral inexactitudes in the Scriptures, showing that it is in fact the very substance of the term inerrant that they find unacceptable. Thus strange and different meanings have been given to the confession of inerrancy in our church.

Others have employed the term inerrancy to the Scriptures, unequivocally and without embarrassment, and insist that such an honest confession of biblical inerrancy in the doctrine and practice of the church is of vital importance for its peace, harmony and mission.

The point of controversy among us, then, is not that the term inerrant should be applied to the Scriptures, but, rather, what it means, especially in view of the human character of Scripture. Does it mean that every word of Scripture is inerrant in the normal sense of the word, as meaning 'freedom from all errors and contradictions' in theology and in matters of fact, concerning which it speaks? Or must it mean something less, in view of the obvious human character of Scripture?

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that we are bound by the Christian faith to believe and to accept what the Scriptures say about themselves, as the truth, unequivocally and without reservation (John 8:31-32; 10:35; 17:17; etc.). Nowhere and under no circumstances do the Scriptures themselves indicate that we are to expect from them anything less than 100% factually correct information or truth. On the contrary, Christ and his apostles always refer to, and quote, the Scripture as being totally reliable and factually correct. The mere citation of Scripture, in their estimation, settles a matter and puts it beyond dispute (Matthew 4:4-7; 19:3-6; Luke 24:25-27).
2. We believe, teach, and confess that the *so la scriptura* principle of the Lutheran Reformation compels us to accept, and to abide by, the Scriptures' own statements about their truthfulness - that is their inerrancy - and not to be guided by the fallible judgments of our own human reason in the face of difficulties in the Scriptures. If the Scriptures teach and assume their own inerrancy, then so must we.
3. We believe, teach, and confess that every word of Scripture, both from the point of view of its human character, as well as from the point of view of its divine character,

is infallible and inerrant, in the sense that it contains no real errors or contradictions in any matters of which it treats.

4. In our confession of the inerrancy of Scripture we use the term quite honestly and unequivocally in its normal and proper sense, as freedom from all mistakes, errors, and contradictions, factual as well as theological, in spiritual, moral, historical, geographical, scientific, or other earthly matters, whether these are related to the Law or to the Gospel ( *Doctrinal Statements, The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy* , B1).
5. We believe, teach, and confess that this infallibility and inerrancy of Scripture is a matter of faith. This means that we believe it because the Scriptures themselves teach it ( *Doctrinal Statements, The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy* , B1). We believe that we are not under any obligation, therefore, to prove the inerrancy of the Scriptures by demonstrating how passages that may seem to be contradictory can harmoniously be fitted together. If persons wish to present such harmonisations of difficult passages they are at liberty to do so and their efforts may be very useful in guarding against false interpretations of Scripture; for, if the Scriptures are in fact inerrant one cannot accept as valid any interpretation of one passage which contradicts another passage. We believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, however, before and without such harmonization, simply on the Scripture's own testimony about itself ( *Doctrinal Statements, Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy* , B1, par. 1). In the same way we believe in the real presence of Christ's body and blood in the Sacrament without an inspection of the elements.
6. While we readily acknowledge that there are problems in the Scriptures, where, on the surface, to our reason, there may appear to be contradictions, yet we believe that the Scripture's own testimony about itself requires us to believe that this is not really so ( *Doctrinal Statements, The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy* , B1, par. 2). We believe that, if we were to have full access to all the details of the historical circumstances, we would see that, what seems to us now to be contradictory (separated as we are from the historical events by thousands of years) would be seen to fit together perfectly.
7. We confess the inerrancy of the Scriptures as they were given by the Holy Spirit through the sacred writers in the original manuscripts. That copyists later inadvertently or deliberately introduced variant readings, and so also mistakes and errors, in later copies, is obvious. The term inerrancy is not intended to apply to such variant readings. This does not mean to imply, however, that since the original manuscripts have been lost, there is now no value for us in biblical inerrancy. On the contrary, the science of textual criticism and evaluation has enabled us to be almost certain what the original text was, in all but a very few areas. Most variants affect only word order or other insignificant details. None affect doctrine. Inasmuch as, and to the extent that, subsequent copies faithfully reproduced the original manuscripts, the inerrancy ascribed to the autograph manuscripts of Scripture applies also to the copies. Self-evidently even translations that are faithful to an inerrant text will be more faithful to the original (and so more authoritative) than translations that are faithful merely to a corrupted text.



## NEGATIVE

1. We reject and condemn all attempts to define the terms 'infallibility' and 'inerrancy' in such a way as to depart from the normal meaning of 'unable to err' and 'freedom from all error and contradiction in matters of fact and theology' ( *Doctrinal Statements, The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy* , B1). In particular we reject and condemn any understanding of biblical inerrancy that implies merely a 'oneness of thrust found in the Scriptures towards Christ.'
2. We reject and condemn, as dishonest and deceitful, all the names that have been devised for real errors, such as 'irreconcilable discrepancies', 'peripheral inexactitudes', ' *leves errores* ' and the like, by which people would escape the condemnation of the church for teaching that there are errors in the Bible, but which nevertheless mean precisely that.
3. We reject and condemn any insistence upon harmonization of difficult passages of Scripture, when it is intended thereby that our faith in the inerrancy of Scripture depends upon such rational harmonization, rather than upon the teaching of the Scripture itself.
4. On the other hand, we reject and condemn unkind criticism of sincere and genuine efforts at harmonization of difficult passages, as if it were somehow an illegitimate exercise, or as if it would be much better and more honest to allow what appears on the surface to be an error or a contradiction to remain and to be seen as a real error or an irreconcilable contradiction, rather than to show that 'it is not really so' ( *Doctrinal Statements, Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy* par. 2). It is dishonest to show a contempt or disdain for all efforts at harmonization while professing to believe in biblical inerrancy.
5. We reject and condemn every attempt to depreciate biblical inerrancy with the argument that, since it concerns the original autograph manuscripts that have been lost; therefore it is of no value to us today.
6. We reject and condemn also any and all attempts to confine the inerrancy and infallibility of Scripture to the gospel thrust or central teaching of God's Word, and in this way to exempt the details of history and other matters from such inerrancy, as if Scripture may err when teaching such 'peripheral matters'.
7. We reject and condemn every suggestion that the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture is of no value to the church anyway, because many of the Fundamentalist churches that hold to the inerrancy of the Scriptures are involved in serious errors. While it is true that to hold to the inerrancy of Scripture is no guarantee of purity in doctrine, yet it is certain that to reject the inerrancy of Scripture necessarily involves one in false doctrine and heresy.

## Article 7

### THE CANON OF SCRIPTURE

As far as we are aware, there has been no disagreement on the fact that we have a book of Holy Scripture and we are generally agreed which books belong to the Canon of Scripture (that is the accepted list of books of the Scripture).

But there have been conflicting statements about what is meant by canonical Scripture. When, for example, we find methods or tests advocated to be applied to canonical Scripture

in such a way that the authority or even the canonicity of certain books, or portions of books, is brought into question, or when it is stated that there are conflicting theologies, in the sense of real doctrinal differences, evident in the various canonical books, then it is clear that there are indeed disagreements on what canonicity really means. The point of disagreement, then, concerns the nature and implications of canonicity.

### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that the question of the canonicity of the books of Scripture (the question of which books are to be regarded as the authoritative Word of God) is basically an historical question. Whatever the holy writers themselves may have thought and felt about the ultimate destiny and use of the writings that the Holy Spirit inspired through them, God himself knew what he wanted preserved for all men for all time (Matthew 24:35), and he saw to it that the books that he had inspired for this purpose so impressed themselves upon his church that they required the church to recognize their divine inspiration or canonicity.
2. All the criteria, such as apostolicity and harmony, etc., which the early church regarded as important in evaluating the books that were competing for recognition as canonical Scripture, cannot be discussed here. Suffice it to say that we regard it as very important to see that the early church regarded 'apostolicity' as implying that the work in question must have been written by an apostle or his helper, so that the writing possessed the apostolic authorization given by Christ himself (Ephesians 2:20). 'Apostolicity' means much more than simply historical closeness to Jesus.
3. We acknowledge that the Septuagint of the Old Testament included some writings that are not in the Hebrew canon of the Old Testament; and that sometimes the New Testament cites the Septuagint translation authoritatively when it does not follow the Hebrew text. There is room for debate about the authority of the Septuagint translation.
4. We acknowledge that among the twenty seven books of the New Testament there are seven that were not immediately received or recognized by the early church as belonging to the canon of Scripture for one reason or another. These are: Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. These books have been called the *antilegomena*. The others have been called the *homologoumena*. The distinction between the *homologoumena* and the *antilegomena* is an historical one, and the Lutheran Church has never asserted that someone is necessarily a heretic, if he believes that, for some legitimate reason, he cannot accept one or the other of the antilegomena as canonical Scripture. Luther too, for a time, did not accept the book of James as canonical Scripture.
5. We believe, teach, and confess, however, that, when any book is received and acknowledged to be canonical Scripture, then such acceptance necessarily implies that it has the same canonical status as the other books. There are no degrees of canonicity, as if some books are more canonical than others.
6. We believe, teach, and confess that, to accept a book as canonical Scripture means to accept it as the inspired, and therefore inerrant, Word of God, and that it is therefore thoroughly truthful and authoritative like the rest of canonical Scripture. This is the formal principle. This implies also that the material principle (the Gospel) must be decisive in the interpretation of that book, so that no passage therein may be given an interpretation that conflicts with the Gospel or with any other passage of canonical Scripture.

## NEGATIVE

1. We reject and condemn, as a confused and unfair misunderstanding of Luther and others, the allegation that the way in which they regarded one or another of the *antilegomena* is an indication of the way in which they regarded the rest of the books of Scripture (the *homolegoumena* ).
2. We reject and condemn, as a deceitful betrayal and denial of the very meaning of canonical Scripture, the view that a book of the *antilegomena* such as 2 Peter (or of the *homolegoumena* ) unequivocally belongs to the 'canonical Scriptures' and yet at the same time that that book was not written by the author given in the book itself, but by some forger at a much later date. The writer of 2 Peter asserts that he is none other than the apostle Peter himself, who saw the Lord in glory and heard the voice of the heavenly Father on the mount of transfiguration. To assert that the apostle Peter did not write that book and yet to accept it as canonical Scripture is an attack, not only upon that one book, but upon the whole canonical Scripture itself; for it undermines the very meaning of canonicity. It is a rejection of scriptural authority to hold that what according to clear biblical statements actually is, or actually happened, may be regarded as what actually is not, or actually did not happen (1972 Statement on Inerrancy *Doctrinal Statements* , B1, par. 4, point 2).
3. We reject and condemn, as a confused undermining, both of the formal and of the material principles, the assertion that the antilegomena quite unambiguously belong to the canon of Scripture, and yet that conflicting theologies are to be found in those writings, some of which assert a Messianic millennium, or deny the possibility of a second repentance, or teach a concept of faith contrary to that found elsewhere in the Scriptures.
4. We reject and condemn, as dangerous and confused false teaching, all statements that imply that there is no clear or authoritative canon of Scripture at all; e.g., 'that the borderline of the canon runs through its very middle'.
5. We reject and condemn, as totally inadequate and misleading, the suggestion that, when the early church asked concerning a writing: 'Is it apostolic?' as a test for canonicity, this meant simply: 'Was it historically close to Jesus?' or 'Does it witness to Christ?' rather than that this was an enquiry into apostolic authorship and so into authorization by Christ.
6. We reject, as false and inadequate, any supposed process of canonization of the books of the Old Testament that makes their recognition totally dependent upon their use in the New Testament. Certainly the Old Testament was properly regarded as canonical Scripture by Christ and his apostles long before the New Testament was given. Today, however, we may recognize the canonicity of the Old Testament simply by accepting the verdict of Christ and his apostles. This, however, is not what established the canonicity of the Old Testament.

## Article 8

### THE PURPOSE OF SCRIPTURE

There has been no argument among us on this, that the central purpose of God in giving us the Scriptures is 'to make us wise unto salvation', as Scripture says in 2 Timothy 3:15. But whether the words: 'all scripture... is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' allow us to derive true teaching on questions of origins and of geography, history, and science, etc., seemingly not immediately connected with our salvation, has been a matter of considerable disagreement among us. Some have maintained, for example, that it is beyond the purpose and scope of Genesis to provide information of scientific interest about the origin of the universe and all creatures. It has been asserted that Genesis teaches relationships, and not origins. From this it has been deduced that any use of Scripture to provide authoritative information on origins is an abuse of the Word of God.

Others have maintained that whatever Scripture clearly teaches on any matter at all must be held to be authoritative and truthful. It cannot be an abuse of Scripture, therefore, to derive from it authoritative information concerning the origin of this world and everything in it, or what occurred during the universal flood in Noah's day, or the confusion of languages at the tower of Babel, etc.

On the contrary, we Christians must reject, as false and presumptuous, every teaching or theory of man that conflicts with what God has dearly revealed to us in Scripture on any subject at all. While there has been no argument on the central purpose of Scripture, then, there has been disagreement concerning the legitimate scope of authoritative biblical truth.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that the central purpose of Scripture is to 'make men wise unto salvation', that is to impart to them such knowledge as is of vital importance to their salvation (2 Timothy 3:15-17). This includes Law and Gospel as well as information to correct false ideas and theories that may jeopardize their salvation or undermine a true Christian life.
2. We have to acknowledge and sincerely declare, however, that nowhere in the Scriptures themselves do we see Christ or his apostles limiting the truthfulness of biblical statements or their usefulness only to that which is immediately valuable for, or pertinent to, man's salvation.
3. We believe, teach, and confess, therefore, that it is not man's prerogative to place limitations upon the usefulness or the application of God's truth that God himself does not place upon it or reveal to us in the Scriptures. We must acknowledge, therefore, that whatever the Scriptures teach clearly, on any matter whatsoever, they teach with divine authority, and man will do well to believe that word and be governed by it without any limitation. Jesus said: 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?' (John 3:8-13).

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn any theories on the nature and purpose of Scripture that would undermine its central purpose to be devoted to man's salvation in Christ. In particular, we reject every attempt to put all the teachings of Scripture on an equal level of importance, as if it were just as central to God's purpose in giving us the Scriptures to use it as a textbook for scientific and archaeological research as it is for God's people to use it 'for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness' (2 Timothy 3:16).
2. On the other hand, we reject and condemn, as an error that denies the essential nature of Scripture as God's authoritative Word, the view that Scripture does not have the same authority when it speaks of earthly things or things of scientific interest as it does when it speaks of things that directly concern the Gospel and our salvation.

3. We reject and condemn in particular any attempt to limit or to restrict the usefulness of Scripture where God himself has not limited it. It is especially presumptuous for man to deduce from the main saving purpose of Scripture that it is an abuse of Scripture to derive information from it concerning the origin of the earth and all creatures, since, in his 'scholarly' judgment, man imagines that these matters are irrelevant to salvation and the Gospel.

## Article 9

### SCRIPTURE IS THE SOURCE OF DOCTRINE

That the Scriptures are to be the only source of doctrine and the sole norm and standard by which all doctrines and teachings are to be judged ( *sola scriptura* ) is generally acknowledged among us. But what this means in practice has been a matter of controversy.

#### AFFIRMATIVE

1. Because Scripture says: 'No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation' (2 Peter 1:20) we insist upon the Lutheran principle of *sola scriptura* without any equivocation or compromise. This means that the Scriptures alone shall be the standard according to which all matters of doctrine and life are to be judged. Whatever does not have its source in Scripture is not Christian theology.
2. We believe, teach, and confess, therefore, that the proper procedure by which to arrive at teachings and doctrines for the church is the old procedure of assessing ' *loci* '. This means that all the passages of Scripture that clearly speak directly or indirectly on a certain matter should be noted. Because the human mind is prone to misunderstandings and interpretations, priority must be given to those passages in which the Scriptures clearly set out to speak directly on the issue in question as the main theme of discourse. The substance of these passages should then be faithfully set forth as the essential teaching of God's Word on that particular issue. While the Scriptures are absolutely authoritative in all that they say, whether in parables, in picture language, in figures of speech, or in direct, clear, and precise statements, yet the human mind is more apt to misunderstand or to misapply (in favour of its own bias) what is spoken in pictures or figurative language. For this reason our basic source of doctrine must be clear and direct statements of Scripture.
3. We affirm that also the doctrine concerning Scripture is to be derived from the Scriptures' own statements about themselves, and not from human judgments or perceptions of what men find in the Scriptures. By this we mean that such passages of Scripture as: 'Thy word is truth' (John 17:17) and 'The scripture cannot be broken' (John 10:35) speak to the issue of biblical inerrancy and are authoritative statements of God on that matter. It is presumptuous to conclude that, because errors and contradictions seem to be in the Scriptures, therefore Scripture teaches that it does have errors. This is an erroneous human judgment which opposes the clear teaching of Scripture on this matter.
4. We believe, teach, and confess that whatever the Scriptures clearly teach on any subject is a doctrine in the sense of a teaching of God's Word on that matter. No one is free to contradict whatever Scripture teaches on any matter, however trivial he may imagine it to be. But, as we have already declared, while all teachings of the Scripture have the same divine authority, yet they do not all have the same importance when viewed from the central purpose of Scripture.

5. We believe, teach, and confess that the divine authority of Scripture as the source of all doctrine and teaching extends to all legitimate inferences and deductions from the words of Scripture. Without this there can be no personal assurance of salvation, since Scripture nowhere states that God is gracious to us personally, calling us individually by name. The statements of Scripture that God wishes to save all sinners, and that Christ died for the whole world, can give assurance of salvation to the individual only if he draws the inference that 'God has saved me'. It is a legitimate, logical deduction to reason that, since Christ died for the whole world, therefore Christ died for me. Without such legitimate deductions we could never know that we are saved. Such a legitimate deduction must be seen as the clear teaching of God's Word on that matter. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself proved the resurrection of the dead from Scripture statements which do not explicitly speak of the resurrection (Mark 12:26). Jesus cannot be shown to be the Messiah except through legitimate deductions drawn from the Old Testament Scripture.

## NEGATIVE

1. We reject and condemn any compromising of the Lutheran principle of *sola scriptura*, by which the views and theories of men, or their fallible perceptions of what they find in Scripture - as distinct from what Scripture itself says - are allowed to be a source of their beliefs and teachings.
2. We reject and condemn, as an obvious attack upon the Scriptures as God's Word, any suggestion that those who refer to its statements as authoritative and final, on any matter on which it gives clear teaching, are using the Bible as a 'paper pope' or as a 'divine codex' in a derogatory sense. If such terms are intended to repudiate the use of Scripture to provide authoritative information on any matter of which it clearly speaks, then this is to deny the *sola scriptura* principle directly and deliberately.
3. We reject and condemn, as a subtle rejection of the *sola scriptura* principle, every interpretation of passages by which theologians would set aside the plain and obvious meaning of Scripture by reference to what they imagine the historical conditions were at the time, or to what they imagine the intention of the writer was. The *sola scriptura* principle, which implies that Scripture alone must interpret Scripture, does not allow us to give more weight to our own conjectures in the interpretation of Scripture than to the plain and simple words of Scripture itself.
4. We reject and condemn, as a faith destroying error and as a repudiation of the human character of Scripture, the position that the *sola scriptura* principle forbids us to derive any teaching from the Scriptures by logical deduction, but allows us to accept only explicit statements of Scripture as the basis for scriptural teaching and doctrine. Such an error arrogantly condemns our Lord Jesus Christ himself and his apostles, who declared that all the prophets testified that everyone who believes in Christ would receive the remission of sins (Acts 10:43). All the prophets teach this implicitly, although not always explicitly.

## Article 10

### UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE

We have repeatedly observed that virtually all the differences in theology that have disturbed our church have been due to differing views of, and approaches to, Scripture. There can be no unity among us unless the differences in this area are fully overcome.

All that we have said so far on the doctrine of Scripture is relevant to a sound and valid understanding of what God reveals to us in Scripture. We believe, therefore, that, unless there is true agreement on both the positive and the negative statements that we have made in this confession, any other agreement in doctrine is likely to be worthless. Since all that has already been said under the doctrine of Scripture is relevant to a correct and valid understanding of God's Word, we shall not repeat it here.

In our experience, however, we have come up against a particularly deceptive way of interpreting Scripture passages, which gives the impression that it is very biblically based and gospel-orientated, but which, in the final analysis, is really nothing but subjectivism. Because this method of interpreting the Scriptures has already done much harm in the church in recent years, and because it has the potential to bring into question sound doctrines and practices of the church, we need to give particular attention to some of these matters here.

#### Limiting the Scripture Because of Unacceptable Implications

##### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe that any sincere acceptance of the Lutheran principle that the Scriptures alone are our authority ( *sola scriptura* ) will acknowledge that when interpreting the Scriptures we must insist that what the very words of a passage actually say must be given greater authority for the understanding of that passage than what we would understand to be the implications of that passage. The apparent implications of a passage must be seen to be subordinate to what the words express, so that they cannot limit or eliminate the instructions or message that the words themselves convey.
2. Accordingly, we believe that the *sola scriptura* principle requires us to heed the message of passages like Romans 16:17, which very clearly requires us to 'mark' and to 'avoid' such persons as 'cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which [we] have learned'. The identification of those who are to be 'avoided' is given by the clear statement of the words of the passage, namely, noting 'those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned'. The identification is not to be deduced from the implications of the passage spelled out later, namely the reason that they serve 'their own belly'. Direct statements of a passage must be given more weight than any of its implications.

##### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject, therefore, every attempt to limit or to eliminate the first clear and obvious meaning of a Scripture passage on the basis of the supposed implications that this would have, or our unwillingness to accept its implications. This is done, for example, in connection with Romans 16:17-18, when people refuse to 'mark and avoid' those whom they judge to be believers in Christ, even though they know that they 'cause divisions and offenses contrary to apostolic doctrine'. They note that the Word of God here in verse 18 makes certain judgments about these people, they 'serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple'. Since they are not prepared to make such judgments about those whom they consider

to be fellow Christians, they limit the clear instructions to 'mark' and 'avoid', in verse 16, to such only as are obviously unbelievers.

2. We reject and condemn, as a very subtle delusion of Satan, the notion that Scripture itself is limiting or eliminating the application of its very clear and simple instructions when it spells out implications or judgments that we ourselves would not be prepared to make.

### Using Presumed Motives of Biblical Writers to Overthrow Their Statements

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe that the statements of the inspired Scriptures must be understood exactly as they read, without manipulation or compromise suggested by the assumed or implied motives or objectives of the writers.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject, as a subtle deception of the devil, the presumption to look behind the words of Scripture to perceive the motives or objectives of the sacred writers, and then, on the basis of such assumed motives, to compromise or to limit the clear statements or injunctions of the sacred text, with the understanding that we could accomplish the same purpose in a different way. This is done, for example, in connection with the apostolic instruction 'Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak' (1 Corinthians 14:34), when theologians assume that, in giving these instructions, the apostle is concerned only that women should not exercise undue authority over men. They then limit the apostle's prohibition of speaking to only such speaking as they feel would be exercising undue authority over men, as if it were sure, (without any express statement in the text) that that is the apostle's only, or chief, concern. Such presumption results in debunking the Scriptures, so that while the Word of God says quite simply that women are to 'keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak', theologians say, in opposition, that women need not keep silence in the churches, for it is permitted unto them to speak.

### Using Our Own Concepts to Distort or Nullify Statements of Scripture

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe that a willingness to submit to the Scriptures means that the clear and obvious meaning of the words of Scripture must in every way be allowed to instruct our concepts and to change them radically, but that our concepts dare never be allowed to manipulate or alter the obvious sense of Scripture.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn the approach to an understanding of Scripture in which the way we see or evaluate things today is allowed to manipulate, to change, or to render inapplicable what the words of Scripture clearly teach or record. This is done, for example, when it is maintained, on the basis of the context, that in his injunction for women to remain silent in the churches the apostle is concerned only that there should be order in the Christian worship services. But then, instead of allowing the apostolic requirement for silence to instruct them on the meaning of good order (that it is in itself disorder for women to speak in the church contrary to their role) theologians choose to limit the kind of speaking that women are allowed to engage in during worship services to that which does not contravene their own concepts of good order.



In this way they ostensibly try to implement the scriptural injunctions by nullifying them.

### Understanding the Scriptures in Terms of 'Cultural Relevance'

The matter of 'cultural relevance' has opened up another area of disagreement in the church. This again has exposed two opposing views of Scripture. On the one hand, there are those who hold that it is quite legitimate to take the essential concepts of the Gospel, separate them from the historical, factual context in which they appear in the Scriptures, and clothe them with a modern cultural setting, and yet imagine that they retain a valid Christian gospel message. In this way, for example, they may speak of Jesus and his disciples as if they lived in contemporary outback Australia, on a cattle station or among the drovers, in the mulga, with goannas, and jackeroos, with the pubs and the beer of our days. Or they may speak of Christ's birth on earth as being contemporaneous with modern radio, television and our present political leaders, and yet they imagine that this somehow still presents a portrait of Christ and a presentation of his work that is just as valid as that given in the Scriptures. And, in addition, they imagine that it is far more relevant to people today and so should be more readily accepted by them.

On the other hand, others in the church insist that deliberately to depart from the revealed biblical information and to substitute for it information from our modern culture that is not revealed in Scripture is to proclaim a lie in the name of Christ and to be guilty of false witness, losing thereby not only the historical setting or format of the Gospel, but, in fact, the very Gospel itself.

While the one side wants to employ, not only contemporary idioms and techniques as much as possible, but also to transpose the biblical material into modern cultural settings, so as to make the message relevant to modern man in the interests of the mission of the church, the other side sees this practice as undermining the Gospel and preaching another Gospel, which is cursed by the inspired apostle Paul (Galatians 1:6-9). The argument focuses, we believe, upon the nature of the Gospel or the Christian faith. Do the historical facts given in Scripture constitute a vital part, or aspect of the Christian Gospel, or do they not? Can one distil, separate, or distinguish the 'concepts' and the 'truths' of the Christian faith from the historical setting in which Scripture has revealed them (as the substance, nature, and essence is distinguished from the form, packaging, or shell) without detracting from the essential truth of the faith itself?

To these questions we believe one side would have to answer 'Yes', and the other side would have to answer 'No'.

Another lively contemporary issue that is somewhat related to this is whether Christ can be called by the names of other pagan gods, or referred to in female terms, so that, provided the 'essential Christian concepts' such as 'the love of God' and 'the atonement', etc. are present in such religious presentations, despite the superficial differences in form and historical setting, the essential Christian Gospel is still present to provide salvation by these means. We have not been aware of any public presentation of this error in its crass form within our church, although there have been written statements occasionally which would appear to have some such presuppositions.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that there is only one Christian Gospel, namely the one revealed to us in Scripture together with all the pertinent information that God has given to us in his Word on these matters. Scripture says: 'Though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached

unto you, let him be accursed' (Galatians 1:8). According to God's Word, salvation through any other than the historical Christ of Scripture is impossible. It says: 'Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved' (Acts 4:12).

2. We believe, teach, and confess that the true Gospel of Scripture is the Gospel of the incarnate Son of God. 'The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us' (John 1:14). This incarnation of the Son of God, then, occurred only at the precise time and place in the history of this world that are revealed in Scripture. The written Gospels give the important details of time and place relating to Christ's incarnation.
3. We believe, teach, and confess that all the historic facts revealed in Scripture relating to Christ's birth, life, passion, and death are an intimate part of the Gospel and of the true Christian faith. Jesus himself insisted that the incident in which the woman poured precious ointment on him shall be proclaimed everywhere with the Gospel (Matthew 26:13). Just as there could have been no incarnation of the Son of God into our world without its occurrence at a precise time and place, so also there can be no true faith in the Gospel of the incarnation which denies the historic facts of time, location and circumstance through which, and in which, the incarnation occurred.
4. We believe, teach, and confess that the Christian religion is absolutely unique among the religions of the world, especially also in this, that it is the religion of history, the religion that tells us of God's entering into our history of time, space and material substance. This sets the Christian faith apart from Buddhism and all the pagan religions, which are not religions of the historic entry of God into our world, but simply the subjective musings and the teachings and systems that have occurred in the minds of men deluded by Satan. The Christian Gospel cannot dispense with, or abandon, the historic details concerning the birth, the life, suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ without at the same time ceasing to be the unique Christian faith of history, and degenerating to the level of the subjective musings or speculations of mere man.
5. We believe, teach, and confess also that the earthly details of the history, time, and circumstances of the Christian Gospel are very important for our faith in the spiritual concepts of the love and grace of God in Christ Jesus. Our Lord Jesus stated: 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?' (John 3:12). God himself, therefore, closely links the earthly facts with the heavenly realities, in such a way that faith in the heavenly concepts is not possible without acceptance also of the earthly information in which they are couched. It is a fatal error, therefore, to distinguish between the historic circumstances and the essential concepts of the Gospel as if the former belong merely to the external form or packaging of the Gospel, whereas the latter belong to the essential nature or essence of the Gospel, which is indispensable.
6. It is of fundamental importance, then, for our Christian witness and the mission of the church, to be meticulously faithful to the historical and earthly details of the Gospel revealed to us in Scripture. Not every historical detail of the Gospel, however, has been revealed in the Scriptures. We have not been given, for example, any detailed portrait or picture of Jesus. In painting pictures and scenes presenting the Gospel, therefore, artists must draw on their imagination for many details. This is quite legitimate, with the understanding that such material may not be historically correct. It is also true that, especially as children, and even as adults, we all have many false mental images or fantasies on the details of Scripture stories and the gospel accounts.

As we learn and become more mature in our faith, some of these false impressions are progressively corrected by the authoritative information of the Scriptures. It is one thing to have a false and mistaken mental image or picture of the details of Scripture stories and of the Gospel through ignorance and immaturity. It is quite another matter, knowingly and deliberately to depart from the details specifically revealed in the Scriptures, and to present (as if they were valid), information and details contrary to Scripture, just so as to be more culturally relevant. This is regression into immaturity. Every deliberate distortion and corruption of these details is a distortion and corruption of the Gospel itself, that is, an error by which men are hindered, rather than helped, from coming to faith in Christ.

7. We believe, teach, and confess that the Scriptures themselves verify or substantiate their message with the assertion that thereby the prophecies of old are being fulfilled. Both the fulfilment of the prophecies and the eye-witness testimony to the physical circumstances of Christ's life and death are given as solid grounds for our faith (Matthew 11:2-6 cf. Isaiah 35:4-6). The church, in fact is 'built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone' (Ephesians 2:20). The prophecies of the Old Testament relating to Christ and his work make copious references to earthly and material matters. Similarly also the eyewitness of the apostles refers entirely to facts in the empirical world of sight and sound. Scripture regards these matters as of great importance to the foundations of the church.

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We, therefore, reject and condemn, as apostasy from the faith and a perversion of the Gospel, every suggestion that there are a number of valid Christs (some black, some white, or of various races) or that we can substitute for the scriptural circumstances of the Christian faith - especially for the earthly details and localities of Christ's birth, suffering, death, and resurrection - other circumstances and places within the culture of modern societies without at the same time invalidating the Gospel. A Christ who was born in, or who suffered and died in outback Australia in the twentieth century, crucified on a sturdy polythene telephone pole, is not the Christ of Scripture, who fulfilled the prophecies, but the Christ of 'another gospel' cursed by the apostle Paul in Galatians 1:6-9.
2. We reject and condemn every attempt to concoct or devise a 'gospel' that does not operate wholly and solely with the biblical information that God has revealed to us in the Scriptures. Every attempt to distil or separate a Christian 'gospel' or 'truths' and 'principles' out of, and away from, the historical details revealed in Scripture, as if these details were merely superficial packaging, and so irrelevant to the Gospel, is presumptuous folly. Men may indeed imagine that they can grasp an abstract 'love of God in Christ' without the manger at Bethlehem, or an abstract 'atonement' without the crown of thorns. But such abstractions do not proceed from the Scriptures. They are, in fact, contrary to the Scriptures, which intimately unite these truths to physical and empirical circumstances. They are delusions and fantasies of the human mind in rebellion against the Word of God. They are the lying deceptions of Satan.
3. We reject and condemn, as a rejection of, or an aversion to, the historic incarnation of Christ, any attempt to bypass or to ignore the historical details of Scripture, as if they were somehow unimportant to the Gospel, so that they may be regarded as belonging to an optional format, packaging or arrangement of the Gospel, but not the essential nature or substance of the Gospel itself (Matthew 26:13).

4. We reject and condemn, as a degradation of the historic Christian faith to the level of a pagan cult or human fantasy and speculation, every attempt to disconnect the Christian truths and concepts from the earthly details and circumstances in which Scripture has revealed them. Particularly arrogant and presumptuous is the attempt to substitute other contemporary earthly details as a framework for the Christian truths as if they could be just as valid as those which Scripture has revealed. To do this for the sake of making the Gospel more relevant to men in our modern culture is quite naive, and succeeds only in making the Gospel utterly unbelievable as if it occurred in the realm of fantasy and fiction, rather than in the realm of fact and truth, so that it becomes totally irrelevant to all men. We intend hereby to reject and condemn any and every attempt to present abstracted 'gospel truths' as if they occurred historically in outback Australia, Africa, Iceland or New Guinea, or as if it were a matter of no importance where and when they occurred, since allegedly these matters belong only to the peripheral packaging but not to the substance of the Gospel.
5. We reject and condemn every attempt to remove, distort or substitute the historical details of the Gospel revealed in the Scriptures. Nowhere do the Scriptures deliberately depart from the revealed factual information in order to become more relevant to other cultures. Neither should we do this today. We acknowledge that in Revelation 1:12-18 a very dramatic picture of Christ, with eyes as flames of fire and feet as burning brass, is presented in a vision to John. This was not an effort to make Jesus culturally more relevant to John, but it was, as Revelation 1:1 indicates a presentation to signify things which must shortly come to pass. To use this passage in order to justify modern presentations of Jesus with black skin and thick lips, etc., so as to be more culturally relevant to different races, is quite irresponsible.
6. We reject and condemn the view that the earthly details of the Gospel are unimportant, expendable, or able to be substituted with more culturally relevant material, because this view presumptuously rejects the importance of the Old Testament prophecies, which Scripture regards as so vital to authenticate and to verify the New Testament's information. Micah 5:2 compared with Matthew 2:4-6, for example, exposes every outback Australian village or other proposed venue, except Bethlehem, for the birth of Christ, as lies and a presumptuous denial of Scripture.
7. Just as it is not the prerogative of man to fabricate non-biblical 'culturally relevant' details as a framework for the Gospel, so also it is totally false and contrary to the Christian faith to accept the gods of other religions or even a female person as being the one Christ under a different name through which the salvation of man is possible (Acts 4:12). This step towards the apostasy of universalism is very prevalent today as a popular concession towards the establishment of a one-world religion. We totally reject it.

## Article 11

### OPEN QUESTIONS

While there has been very little actual debate on the whole matter of open questions in our church, yet it would seem that in practice this too has been a matter of considerable difference.

No one denies that there are open questions in the sense of issues that cannot be decided. The Scriptures do not speak to us clearly and decisively on every issue. When, however, matters on which the Scriptures do speak decisively are regarded as open questions because theologians cannot agree on them, in spite of the clarity of Scripture, then this is simply a matter of arrogant, defiant disobedience to God's Word. We have seen repeatedly what appears to us to be a plain and simple refusal to submit to clear Scripture passages. Usually the excuse is made that there are differences in interpreting the passage. From here the final step is easily taken with the support of the *Theses of Agreement* (I,4), namely, that, where there are differences of interpretation because of the lack of clarity, there these matters are to be regarded as open questions, which are not divisive of church fellowship. In this way, by this cunning stratagem, effective doctrinal discipline in the church can become quite impossible.

### AFFIRMATIVE

1. We believe, teach, and confess that it is God's authoritative Word, the Scriptures, that establishes articles of faith and not man's ability or willingness to apprehend or accept it.
2. We acknowledge that the Scriptures have not spoken with clarity and finality on every issue. Such matters must be regarded as open questions in the sense that man cannot decide them with finality. Example: the question of whether the soul of a child is passed on via the parents, or whether it is especially created by God in each case.
3. We sincerely declare that we have no right in the church to make demands beyond, and in addition to, what the Scriptures require. Neither are we entitled to be any more decisive on any issue than the Scriptures would indicate - because they are our only authority. But neither are we permitted to teach less than God's Word requires or to speak with less finality than the Scriptures. To do so is not to submit to God's Word as our authority.
4. We acknowledge that because of the hardness of our hearts and the blindness of our eyes we may not always clearly perceive or apprehend what the Scriptures actually clearly set forth and reveal. We may have genuine difficulties with a passage that is not really difficult in itself. Our difficulties and inabilities, however real and sincere, do not undermine or overthrow the essential clarity of the Scripture passage itself.
5. On the other hand, we recognize also that many allege that they have difficulties with a passage merely as an excuse to escape the obvious teaching, or thrust, of that passage. God knows the hypocrisy of their hearts and they shall not escape his judgment.
6. We believe, teach, and confess that not even the genuine - and far less the hypocritical - inability of men to see and to comprehend the teaching of God's Word on any issue or in any passage allows us to regard the matter as an open question. If the passage speaks to us and teaches us very clearly, then we cannot regard the matter as an open

question just because others cannot, or will not, see it as we do. To do so would be disobedience to the Word of God.

7. We believe, teach, and confess that just one clear statement of Scripture or its legitimate inference is sufficient to establish for us an article of faith. The authority of Scripture or its power to command acceptance and obedience is not established by repetition, but by divine authorship.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn, as a dangerous refusal to submit to the authority of God's Word, every attempt to regard any matter as an open question just because theologians cannot agree on the matter.
2. On the other hand, we reject and condemn every assertion that there are no open questions, as if the Scriptures have clearly and finally decided every issue, or otherwise as if the church or its theologians have the right to decide finally issues that the Scriptures themselves have not decided.
3. We reject and condemn, as subtle rebellion against the authority of Scripture, every attempt to discredit clear statements of Scripture by raising all sorts of exegetical problems or difficulties of interpretation, when, in reality, the chief problem is that men do not like to accept what the Scriptures are saying.
4. We reject and condemn an error of Fundamentalism, which holds that clear scriptural teachings that are not fundamental to our salvation, or that have not been affirmed in the confessions of the church or dogmatized by the church, may be regarded as open questions.
5. We reject and condemn the error of restricting our Christian freedom by understanding passages of Scripture in a sense contrary to their context, and pressing them into the service of pious opinions or pietistic judgments of men, as if such views are then most certainly established by Scripture.
6. We reject and condemn, as gross insubordination to the Word of God, and as papistical or ecclesiastical arrogance, the practice of a church or its theologians to claim the right to declare certain teachings of Scripture to be open questions for the sake of peace and harmony within their church, or on the other hand, to close questions which the Scripture has left open.

### Article 12

#### ATTITUDE TO SCRIPTURE

The attitude that God's people should adopt toward Scripture has received very little discussion among us. But we feel that it is a very important matter, and probably the basically different attitudes that have been adopted towards the Scriptures will be at the root cause of different opinions on Scripture and the source from which the different usages of Scripture have arisen. The prevalence of such charges as 'biblicism' or that the Scriptures were being used as a 'paper pope' or a 'divine codex', etc., reveal that there have been important divisions among us in our attitudes towards the Scriptures.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We hold that the right and proper attitude with which Christians should approach the Scriptures is one of reverence and respect, as for the holy authoritative voice of God

himself, in which he gives us his Word, which will endure though heaven and earth shall pass away (Mark 13:31).

2. We believe, teach, and confess that God's inspired Word is absolutely unique and must be regarded differently from every writing of men.
3. The humility with which we are to approach the Word of God will require that we accept the blame for what may appear to us to be errors and contradictions in the Scriptures, rather than that we should ascribe error or contradiction to the holy and inspired written words of God. We today are so far removed - by thousands of years - from the writing of Scripture that it would be utterly presumptuous and sheer arrogance on our part to imagine that we, by our 'great scholarship' today could be sufficiently informed as to be able to pass the judgment that there is real error or contradiction in the Word of God.
4. We are to approach the Scripture prayerfully and humbly, seeking to be enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the words of God's revelation. He alone can impart to us the essence of his revelation that we, by ourselves are unable to appreciate. While with our reason we can understand the phrases and the sentences with which God speaks to us, and the outward facts of his revelation, yet the spiritual message - the true divine intent of Scripture - can be imparted to us only by God himself through the words of Scripture. This calls for a very humble child-like faith, and an implicit trust and confidence in our approach to Scripture, which is quite the opposite of academic, self-confident pride.

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn, as unworthy of a Christian, any approach to the Scriptures by which men would imagine that they can treat the Scripture as any other work, or that they can work upon Scripture with the ordinary secular academic tools to extract the message of God from it. God deals with us in Scripture; not we with him.
2. Above all, we regard it as a blasphemous insult to God when men presume to sit in judgment over Scripture so that they would criticise the words of Scripture, declaring them to be self-contradictory or in error, as if they did not conform to reality.
3. We reject and condemn a mystic or occult attitude in men's approach to Scripture that is shown by their expectation that it should impart knowledge to them in a miraculous manner without the use of their minds or reason to ascertain or to apprehend what the Scripture is saying. The human character of Scripture implies that human language was used by God in giving us the Scriptures, so that with the application of our human faculties of linguistic understanding, grammar, reason, and logic we may humbly grasp the meaning of Scripture and, in this way, and through these means, the Holy Spirit imparts to us the eternal truths that he would have us to know and accept.
4. By the same token, we reject and condemn a secular academic attitude to Scripture that does not do justice to the divine character of God's Word, by allowing human reason to sit in judgment over Scripture, or by calling into question the words or message that God has given to us in Scripture.

## **Material Issues**

### **THE SUBSTANCE OF OUR FAITH**

The Holy Scripture, as God's revelation to man, is absolutely unique, not only because of its origin, but also because of its substance. It presents to man a unique message or plan of salvation, not by means of some principles of conduct, but through the person and work of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The second person of the Trinity is the core and centre of Scripture. He is the expression of God's will and truth so that he is expressly referred to as the Word ( *logos* ) in John 1:1, the Word of God (Revelation 19:13), the faithful and true (Revelation 19:11), the Amen, the faithful and true witness (Revelation 3:14), the absolute 'yea', with whom there can be no contradictory 'nay' (2 Corinthians 1:19), the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), Alpha and Omega (Revelation 1:8-11; 21:6; 22:13). He is so closely identified with the truth of God that he can claim, 'Everyone that is of the truth heareth my voice' (John 18:37). Hence there is a very close and mysterious relationship between the incarnate Word of God ( *logos ensarkos* ) and the written Word of God ( *logos graptos* ). Consequently, faithfulness to the truth of the written Word of God is faithfulness to Christ, and unfaithfulness to the written Word of God is unfaithfulness to Christ, the Lord. This means that all the teachings or doctrines of God's written Word - the truth of Christ - are bound up with Christ himself. None of the truths of God's Word can be isolated from the Word, who became flesh. They are all important for our relationship with Christ and our salvation. Hence Jesus says: 'If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free' (John 8:31-32).

## Article 13

### THE PERSON AND WORK OF JESUS CHRIST

Present Christology is affected by profound scepticism about the reliability of much of the New Testament, as evidenced in the 'quest for the historical Jesus'.

Many present theologians speak of Jesus as a human being in whom God was uniquely active, as revealing God, and as functioning in certain ways, but stop short of calling him fully divine. Some modern writers view Jesus as an inspired man, whose inspiration was different from that of the inspired prophets of old only in degree. This means that the Gospel is in danger of being transformed into moralism, in which human beings are counselled to save themselves by trying to follow his example.

The notion that Jesus' humanity can be present only locally indicates a serious deficiency in teaching about the sharing of properties in the incarnate Jesus, with the serious consequence that the real presence in the Lord's Supper is frequently denied.

Some modern writers even reinterpret the resurrection of Christ in ways that deny its historicity.

Other modern writers espouse universalism, refusing to speak of Jesus Christ as the only Saviour for all mankind.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that the witness of the New Testament to the person and work of Jesus Christ is fully authoritative and reliable. The Scriptures, as the Word of God, have their focus in God the Word. Though they are fully human, they are at the same time fully divine and authoritative. There should be no discontinuity between Jesus' own statements about himself and the Jesus whom the apostles and evangelists proclaimed. What the apostles and evangelists said of Jesus is rightly understood as an unfolding of what was already there in Jesus' self-witness, and was



stamped with Jesus' own authority. Accordingly we deplore much of the scepticism in the so-called 'quest for the historical Jesus'.

2. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus Christ is the eternally pre-existent Son of God, and that he is fully divine. Before he became man he was the Word, who was with God and who was God. He was active in the creation of the world (Psalm 2:5; John 1:1-3; 10:30; Colossians 1:15). He was the Lord and focus of the Old Testament before his incarnation. The Scriptures present many titles of Jesus that indicate his divinity, such as Immanuel, Son of God, Son of Man, the Christ, the Word, the King of Israel, God, Lord, the First and the Last, the firstborn of all creation, the mediator of the new covenant, and the Son of David who will rule for ever. His deity is attested both by his own claims, and the designation of these claims as blasphemous by the Jewish authorities (John 5:1 6-18; 8:54-59; 10:25-39). Qualities and operations of Jesus Christ such as omniscience, his having everlasting dominion, unchangeability, his creating all things, his preservation of all things, his many miracles, his rising from the dead, his reconciling all things to God, his giving eternal life, the fact that he will raise the dead, and the fact that he will judge the world, belong only to one who is fully divine. It would be idolatry to worship anyone other than God, but Jesus Christ is the appropriate object, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, of our worship, prayers and praise (John 5:23; Acts 7:59; 1 Corinthians 16:22; Philippians 2:10; Hebrews 1:6-10; Revelation 22:20). Hymns about Jesus that are embedded in the New Testament itself also witness to his deity (Philippians 2:6-11; Revelation 5:11-14). Jesus' divinity means that his human obedience, suffering, and death for us are different in kind, not merely in degree, from ours. Because he is true God, the second person of the Trinity, he was able to keep the law perfectly in our place, and was able to overcome sin, death, and the devil for us. For this reason his suffering and death were the valid ransom for the sin of the world. The heart of the Gospel is the crucifixion of the Lord of glory.
3. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus Christ became, and still is, a genuine human being, like us in all respects except that he had no human father, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit, and was sinless. His intellectual, religious, social and physical development was fully human. His temptations, his ignorance of the day and hour of the end of all things, and his cry, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' were genuinely human. He experienced, as a human being, childlike submission to parents, hunger, thirst, sorrow, poverty, disgrace, suffering, and death. It is important for our salvation that he was a true human being. Therefore he could be the representative and substitute for all human beings, he could be under the law for us, he could be the substitute for our guilt and punishment, he was able to suffer and die, and he can fully sympathize with our weakness and temptations. He has dealt with the human problem of estrangement from God, sin, and death, right where the problems were, in human beings. Everything he did in his incarnate existence he truly did for us. Because Jesus assumed a human body, human mind, and human soul, our human bodies, minds, and souls have been fully redeemed. It is important for all people that Jesus was sinless, because his righteousness is reckoned to the world whom God has reconciled to himself through him, by making him sin for us. All people have had Jesus' sinlessness counted to their credit by God (objective justification).
4. We believe, teach, and confess that when the Son of God became incarnate all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in him bodily (Colossians 2:9; 1 John 4:2). In his divine freedom the Son of God was under no obligation to become incarnate. But under the gracious will of the Father, and in fulfilment of prophecy, he chose the way

of incarnation and of suffering for our sakes. In the incarnation the infinite has actually come down into the finite (Colossians 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 4:2). We must avoid any suggestion that the two natures act independently of each other in him. The Saviour's divinity is united with his humanity in such a way that neither exists without the other. While in other contexts we accept statements about the freedom, or independence, of the Son of God, we do not find in the New Testament words like 'freedom' used in connection with the incarnation. We are content to say that if we were to be saved, the Son of Man had to be lifted up like the serpent in the wilderness (John 3:14). Reason leads human beings to balk at the proclamation that tells them that they cannot save themselves, but can come to the Father only through that Incarnate One, that particular human being at that particular point in human history. Apart from the incarnation, God is a hidden God, a God of the law and of wrath. However, the incarnation is the greatest revelation of God (Hebrews 1:1-3). The glory of the Son of God was hidden in shame, weakness, suffering, and death. Yet in him human beings may see the Father, who is hidden from their sight (John 1:18; 14:9-10; 1 Timothy 6:16).

5. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus Christ is God, the second person of the Trinity, and also man, in one person. Whatever he did after he became man he did for us as one subject, not two subjects. The Word, the Son of God is the one subject of all his deeds, words, and experiences. It is never appropriate to say that as God he did one thing and that as man he did another thing. It is part of the mystery of the Word's becoming flesh (John 1:14) that contrasting qualities were side by side in Jesus during his life on earth. He was a given number of years old, and is also the second person of the eternal Trinity. He underwent suffering (which implies change), for our sakes; and yet he is the same, yesterday, today, and for ever (Hebrews 13:8). He was 'made perfect' through suffering (Hebrews 2:10; 5:9), for our sakes; and yet he has always been perfect. He was genuinely tempted in every way in which we are tempted (Hebrews 4:15); and as God he is unable to be tempted by evil (James 1:13). He was 'subject to weakness' (Hebrews 5:2) for our sakes; and yet he is all-powerful, and powerful to save. He 'offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death'; and he is also prayed to as God. He 'was heard because of his reverent submission'; and yet to him every knee will bow. He learned filial obedience from what he suffered (Hebrews 5:7-8), although he was the true Son of God. He both was the Prince of life and was crucified. In this one person God the second person of the Trinity is man, and man is God, the second person of the Trinity. Whatever divine attributes Jesus had as the Son of God or as man are to be ascribed to one and the same Lord Jesus Christ, our Saviour.
6. We acknowledge that as we speak of the incarnate Son of God, we speak about him, not as masters of Christology in the sense that we have objectively observed what we say, or derived what we say from our own reason; but as those who have first become foolish in Christ crucified. We do not pretend to understand this great mystery of godliness, that the second person of the Trinity appeared in a human body. We speak of him as those whom God both condemns for our sin and those whom he acquits in Jesus. We acknowledge that we, with all who believe the Gospel, are saved through the preaching of Jesus Christ crucified.
7. We believe, teach, and confess that it is proper, with the Scriptures, to attribute things that are strictly appropriate to either nature in Christ to the one person, or to the other nature (John 6:25-50; 1 Peter 4:1; 1 John 1:7). The communication of properties is the key to speaking correctly about Christ's redemptive work. It is a real exchange, not

merely a matter of language. The blood from his human veins is sacred, and cleanses from sin, because it is the very own blood of the Son of God. Jesus is the bread of life who gives his flesh for the life of the world (John 6:51) because his flesh was the very own flesh of the Son of God. His sufferings and death for all people are eternally valid because they were the sufferings and death of the very own flesh of the eternal and infinite Son of God.

8. We believe, teach, and confess that the presence of Christ after the incarnation is different from the presence of the divine Son, the Word, in the Old Testament before the incarnation. To ward off objections we find it useful to speak of various modes of the presence of the exalted human nature of Christ, including local (or circumscriptive) presence, illocal (or definitive) presence, repletive presence, in which he rules and fills all things, and sacramental presence. These were terms already used in the Middle Ages. Our chief concern in using them is to meet the objection that if Christ's body and blood were present locally only in heaven they could not be really present with the bread and the wine in the Lord's Supper ( *Westminster Confession XXIX*). Our concern is also to ward off the suggestion that if Christ's body were at one and the same time in heaven and on earth it could not be a truly human body. It is now given to his human flesh to be present everywhere or present where it pleases him (Ephesians 1:20-23), for our sakes. For the right hand of God the Father is everywhere. We regard it as a separation of the two natures to speak of Jesus as among us with his Godhead only (See *Heidelberg Catechism* , questions 46-47). We think of Jesus as present with us according to both natures when we gather in his name to worship him, and as we carry out his commission to make disciples of all nations. The confession of the man Jesus Christ as Lord, and the worship of his humanity are, in our view, right and proper (John 20:27-28), because his human nature has been taken into the divine person of the Son of God. It is proper, therefore, also to pray to him according to his humanity. We think of him as just as close to us now as he was to his disciples when he was on earth. We treasure the closeness of God incarnate with us. This does not call forth from us familiarity or contempt, but reverence and worship. The task of making disciples of Christ by baptising and teaching, and all service to Jesus Christ, are done with the assurance that 'Immanuel' is with us always, to the close of the age.
9. We believe, teach, and confess that when the Scriptures speak of divine qualities as *given* to Jesus, we understand those qualities as given to him for our sakes according to his humanity. Likewise, when the Scriptures speak of Jesus as having been *made* or *appointed* something or having *become* something, we understand him as having been made or appointed or become these things *as a human being* , for our sakes. We do not think of any qualities as given to him as the Son of God, for that would imply that he had not had them previously. For example, he was given the authority to judge, because he is the Son of man (John 5:22, 27). Similarly as a human being he was given the Spirit without limit (John 3:34). He was given all authority in heaven and on earth. He was given the name that is above every name. He was given the right to have life in himself. He was given the glory that he had had with the Father before the world began. He was also given authority to forgive sins (Psalm 8:4-6; Daniel 7:14; Matthew 9:8; 11:27; 28:18; John 5:26; 13:3; 17:5; Philippians 2:9; Hebrews 2:7-8). All of this should be referred to him strictly as a human being, or, to say it another way, according to his human nature. Similarly, the Father made him Lord and Christ for our sakes (Acts 2:36) as a human being. The Father appointed him as head over the church for our sakes (Ephesians 1:22) and to judge the world (Acts 17:31) as a

human being. He became the source of eternal salvation (Hebrews 5:9) for our sakes as a human being. The same applies to statements that the Father raised him from the dead, that Jesus was taken up into heaven (Acts 1:11), and that God seated him at his right hand (Ephesians 1:20). Because these things were done to him as a human being, we have confidence about our own resurrection, ascension, and session at God's right hand in glory, for God has united us with him. In the incarnate Jesus Christ divine qualities are said to be given to Jesus' humanity. Because divine qualities are given to Jesus as a human being in the personal union, we do not hesitate to call Mary the one who gave birth to God the Son. His bodily presence in the Lord's Supper also points to this mystery of the communication of attributes.

10. We believe, teach, and confess that it is proper to ascribe what elsewhere could not be said of God, but only of a human being, directly to God the Son in the personal union. We also confess that it is proper to ascribe what elsewhere could not be said of a human being, but only of God, directly to the man Jesus in the personal union. For example, men crucified the Lord of glory (1 Corinthians 2:8); they killed the Prince of life (Acts 3:15); and the Son of God shed blood (1 John 1:7). In this transfer of properties we see our salvation.
11. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus Christ is the heart and focus of all the Scriptures (John 5:39).
12. We believe, teach, and confess that, though Jesus' incarnation was a great condescension, the incarnation itself was not Jesus' humiliation. For he is still a human being in his exaltation. In his humiliation, though remaining fully God, Jesus as man voluntarily abstained from the full and constant use of divine qualities that were communicated to his human nature. When he emptied himself he did not surrender his nature of God. If weakness, poverty, or emptying himself were ascribed to Jesus as the Son of God, he would no longer have been God! It is important to speak of Jesus' humiliation and exaltation with reference to him as man. The incarnate Jesus Christ humbled himself to live in poverty, disgrace, and suffering, for our sakes (Philippians 2:5-11). As the Son of God he always possessed majesty, glory, power, and other divine qualities; but for our sakes, as man, he did not always use them. Otherwise men could never have taken his life (John 10:15; 18:6-11). When the Scriptures speak of Jesus as inferior to the Father (John 14:28), in full dependence on his Father (John 5:22-27), receiving commands from the Father (John 10:18), becoming obedient, and humbling himself (Philippians 2:8), learning obedience (Hebrews 5:6), and praying to the Father, we understand these things as having been said of him with respect to his human nature.
13. We believe, teach, and confess the theology of the cross. Many people marvelled at his miracles, and those who believed in him understood, in part, the witness the miracles gave to him. However, except for such flashes of his majesty, his life was ostensibly no spectacular triumph. It was central to Jesus' understanding of his work that the Son of man had to suffer (Daniel 7:13-14; 21-25; Matthew 16:21; Luke 24:26). Few people believed in him. The suffering and crucifixion of the Son of God turns all human aspirations of success, honour, and whatever else human beings prize, upside down. Together with Jesus' resurrection, the theology of the cross constitutes the core of the Gospel, the wisdom of God. Over against demands for signs from God Jesus offered only the sign of Jonah. When Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus in glory, their conversation focused on the 'exodus' that Jesus would accomplish at Jerusalem (Luke 9:30-31). The cross flies in the face of human ethical and religious

notions. The theology of the cross is in keeping also with the fact that faith deals with things that are not seen. We do not see the risen Lord, the new creation, the body and blood of the Lord in the Supper, the forgiveness of sins, or the new life created in Baptism. By Jesus' cross believers are freed from sin and its curse, and his crucifixion also provides the model and motivation for our self-sacrificing service to our neighbours (Matthew 16:21-24).

14. We believe, teach, and confess that in his exaltation Jesus fully uses the divine attributes that have been communicated to him as a human being. Such divine attributes are his glory, dominion, power, filling all things, knowing all things, being present with all his creatures, having life in himself, and having all things in heaven and on earth under his feet (Ephesians 4:10; Philippians 2:9-11).
15. We believe, teach, and confess that when the Father raised Jesus from the dead he powerfully demonstrated Jesus as the Son of God. Many outwardly innocent people have fallen foul of influential enemies and been unjustly executed. From that point of view there is nothing extraordinary in Jesus' short life. Other people have died for their convictions. What gives Jesus universal value is not only his deity, but also the fact of his resurrection. The resurrection demonstrates that the Gospel is the truth, and the witness of the apostles and evangelists to it is crucial witness. When we were converted the same mighty power with which the Father raised the dead Jesus worked in our dead hearts. When the Father raised the dead Jesus, the one who had borne our sins, he indicated his acquittal of the whole human race. In Baptism we have been joined to Jesus' life. His resurrection is the motive and power of our new lives as Christians. His resurrection is the seal that God will raise us and our loved ones with bodies that will be made like his glorified body. His resurrection is the source of our hope for eternal life. There are many advantages in focusing the proclamation of the Gospel heavily on the resurrection of Jesus. It more easily avoids sidetracks, and leads inquirers into the Scriptures, through which the Holy Spirit works.
16. We believe, teach, and confess that the ascended God-man is present to all his creatures in the universe. As true man and true God he sits at the Father's right hand and rules the universe with power and majesty in the interests of his church, which is his body. He intercedes for them as their high priest and forerunner. As part of our union with Christ we believers ascend with him to heavenly realms. In him human beings will be fully restored to their position of dominion over God's creation. We ardently look for his visible return in glory with the angels of God.
17. We believe, teach, and confess that to know Christ is to know his benefits. The Word was born a true man so that we human beings might be made children of God. We should not speak of the relationship of the divine Son and Jesus' humanity in Jesus without remembering that he was what he was, and did what he did, 'for us men and for our salvation'.
18. We believe, teach, and confess that where Christ is, the Holy Spirit is also. The Spirit of God was active in Jesus' conception as a holy human being, and rested on Jesus particularly at his Baptism and since then. He carried out his ministry as the 'Christ', the one 'anointed' by the Holy Spirit and full of the Spirit (Luke 3:22; 4:1, 14, 18). He therefore claimed to be a prophet. He drove out demons by the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:28). He breathed the Spirit on his disciples with the authority to forgive sins, sent the Spirit at Pentecost, and continues to equip Christians with the baptismal gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:33, 38-39; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Where the Gospel,

which points to Jesus, is proclaimed and used, the Spirit is active, working faith where and when it pleases God.

19. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus Christ's saving work, including his active obedience, also motivates and empowers Christians, wherever they are, to serve God in their daily work, and, as responsible citizens, to stand up for justice between individuals and nations. Christ's saving work has not abolished proper authority in home and state; indeed, it prompts those who are free in Christ to uphold God's great commandments of love, and join with others in seeking rational and appropriate measures that will repress evil and further the greatest good for the greatest number, doing these things as those who are accountable to God, and with the confidence that Christ rules and sustains both the world and his church.

## NEGATIVE

1. We reject and condemn all attempts to see 'redemption' through Jesus merely as the exemplary obedience, suffering, and death of a good human being in whom God was uniquely active.
2. We reject and condemn all attempts to refer to Jesus as divine, not in fact, but only in revelational or functional ways.
3. We reject and condemn all attempts to deny parts of the witness of the New Testament to Jesus or reinterpret the historicity of his resurrection.
4. We reject and condemn all attempts to ascribe humility, subordination, ignorance, and receptivity to the Son of God according to his divinity (kenoticism).
5. We reject and condemn any attempts to ascribe sinful thoughts and sinful desires and mistakes to Jesus Christ, according to his divinity or according to his humanity.
6. We reject and condemn any attempt to suggest that the name of Jesus is not the only name under heaven by which we must be saved (universalism). No one comes to the Father but by this one mediator (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; 1 Timothy 2:4-6).
7. We reject and condemn the teachings that Christ is not now on earth according to his human nature, and that his divinity is outside of his human nature which he has assumed (the *extra Calvinisticum*; *Heidelberg Catechism* 47-48), as they fall short of saying that the whole of the deity of the Son of God was manifest in him bodily (Colossians 2:9; 1 John 4:2). It is a separation of the two natures of the one person. We reject and condemn the teaching that Jesus, according to his human nature, never ceased his divine ordering of the universe during his state of humiliation.
8. We reject and condemn any talk of Jesus having freedom or independence in connection with the incarnation. Though the Son of God had been free from any restraint, he willingly took on himself the limitations of earthly life for our sakes. He did not remain outside the flesh at the same time.
9. We reject and condemn the rationalistic principle that the finite cannot contain the infinite when it is used with reference to the incarnation of our Lord ( *Heidelberg Catechism* 47-48).
10. We reject and condemn any denial that he is with us now according to his humanity, and any attempt to use references to the Holy Spirit to cover over this denial.
11. We reject and condemn the teaching that Jesus' human nature can be present only locally, and that this local presence is now only in heaven.

12. We reject and condemn the suggestion that if Christ's body were at one and the same time in heaven and on earth it could not be a human body.
13. We reject attempts to speak of the eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper as if Christ were not really present or to use formulations that deliberately leave this open. We reject attempts to speak of the eating and drinking in the Lord's Supper as with the heart only and only by faith, or only as mediated by the Holy Spirit, and not also orally, by all who commune, including the unworthy ( *Westminster Confession* XXIX).

## Article 14

### JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

The crucial, central doctrine of all the Scriptures, justification by faith alone, by God's grace alone, without works, for Christ's sake is at risk today also on a variety of fronts.

Justification by faith alone is challenged by:

- liberal theology, which denies Jesus Christ's divinity, eliminates many of the sayings and deeds that the Gospels attribute to him, and denies that Jesus Christ is the only source of salvation.
- liberation theology, which perverts the Gospel into a series of freedoms for oppressed people in this life.
- the continued teaching of the Roman Catholic Church that God's grace is infused into human beings and teaches that good works are necessary for justification.
- the attempts of various churches to turn the Gospel into a new law, or to regard the Gospel in the strict sense as including the Law.
- the charismatic movement, which draws attention away from the theology of the cross to a triumphal theology of glory, which exhibits itself in personal testimonies to victories of faith and experiential evidences of particular charismatic gifts in people.
- the holiness bodies, which suggest that it is possible to cease from sinning, and which deny that the person who is justified is both saint and sinner.
- the age in which we live, which is confronted by a revival of many aspects of Pietism, which places regeneration ahead of justification, stresses life rather than doctrine, mixes Law and Gospel, and is indifferent to serious differences in doctrine.
- tendencies within Lutheranism towards gospel reductionism. This is another way of alleging that because justification by faith alone is the chief article of the faith, all other articles are non-essential.

### AFFIRMATIVE

1. We believe, teach, and confess that justification is a law-court word, the opposite of condemnation (Romans 5:18). Justification by faith alone means that God judges, or accounts, a person to be righteous. God reckons to a person a righteousness that is not his own. To state the obverse, God does not impute his guilt against him; he pardons or forgives him.
2. We believe, teach, and confess that God has justified human beings apart from their attempts to satisfy God by their own actions or works (Romans 3:28; Ephesians 2:9).

God has not been moved to justify sinful people by any attitude or activity of their own.

3. We believe, teach, and confess that all persons who are justified are sinners or 'ungodly' (Romans 4:5). They do not first have to stop sinning or earn justification in any way before or after justification. God has justified them in their condition as sinners.
4. We believe, teach, and confess that justification is objective. God has already declared the whole world to be righteous in Christ (Romans 4:25; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21). Justification is completed, and perfect in itself (Romans 5:6-10). Justification has been fully earned by Jesus Christ, and it is offered in the Gospel. Before there was any movement of sinful people toward God, God in Christ declared the whole sinful world 'not guilty', and this verdict is true irrespective of whether people believe it. God has reconciled the world to himself in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:19). By the righteous act of the one man, the counterpart of Adam, justification has come upon all people (Romans 5:18).
5. We believe, teach, and confess that it is through this good news that the Holy Spirit works faith in the hearts of sinners, and individuals are invited to believe what God has done. Faith receives God's absolving verdict. Faith justifies inasmuch as it lays hold of, trusts, has confidence in, or relies on, God's grace, the forgiveness of sin, and the absolving verdict that God has pronounced (Romans 4:16). God's verdict does not benefit individuals if they do not accept God's verdict. God makes his verdict apply to individuals through the means that God has determined for this purpose: the proclamation of the Gospel and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Those who in faith receive what God freely offers by grace are subjectively justified, benefit from God's verdict, and will receive eternal life. Faith in Christ is the only way for people to obtain personal reconciliation with God (John 3:16-18,36; Acts 10:43).
6. We believe, teach, and confess that faith is reception, and cannot in any way be regarded as the cause of God's justifying verdict. It is better to say that we are justified through faith than 'by means of faith. Faith is not a work. Faith justifies not because of any merit in itself, but by virtue of its object, Jesus' substitutionary death and his resurrection (Romans 4:25).
7. We believe, teach, and confess that God's reason for justifying sinners is his grace, that is, his own inherent favour, or his kind and saving purpose towards sinful, undeserving people. God's grace continues to remain in God. It is not something in man.
8. We believe, teach, and confess that God's justifying grace paid the cost, for God has not unjustly ignored sin. His grace showed itself in the propitiation for sin made by his Son, Jesus Christ. Salvation has not come by any pattern or model set by Jesus Christ, for no sinner could follow such a pattern or model perfectly. The basis of God's justification was Jesus' active obedience to the holy will of God as the substitute for the whole sinful human race and his paying the penalty for human guilt and punishment by his suffering and giving up his life as the ransom price to free human beings. On the basis of Jesus' substitutionary propitiation God has declared sinners righteous (Romans 3:24-25; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; Galatians 3:13). Because God has met the cost of his justifying verdict over guilty people, God remains just in himself, and at the same time he has acted justly in declaring the sinner righteous who believes in Jesus (Romans 3:26).



9. We believe, teach, and confess that through this doctrine alone Christ is given all the honour due to him, namely that through his holy life and innocent suffering and death he is our Saviour. Through this doctrine alone poor sinners can have the abiding comfort that God is assuredly gracious to them.
10. We believe, teach, and confess that some books of the New Testament express the same teaching without using the word 'justification'. It is also expressed as the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, redemption, and sonship of God. These are all ways of declaring the same fact and action of God in Christ. None should be used exclusively and all are valid ways of expressing the same truth. The nature and richness of the Gospel are probably best preserved where each is used for the special emphasis it contributes and the way in which it may serve to correct misuse of the others.
11. We believe, teach, and confess that justification by faith is the chief article of the Christian faith, and that it is closely related to all the other important teachings of the faith. All Scripture has the central purpose of bearing witness to Jesus Christ (John 5:39; 16:12-15). Therefore all Scripture must be understood in keeping with this central purpose, and all doctrine must be determined in accordance with this purpose. So justification by faith is also a criterion for the interpretation of Scripture. No interpretation of any part of Scripture dare contradict, or be in conflict with, the central, focal truth of justification by faith. Negatively, the doctrine of justification may declare what a book, paragraph or passage of Scripture cannot mean, and what ought not to be proclaimed as the teaching of Scripture.
12. We believe, teach, and confess, on the other hand, that caution must be exercised in using justification by faith as a principle of determining all doctrine. No doctrines can be determined by a process of rational deduction from the central doctrine of justification by faith. This central doctrine cannot determine what any passage or paragraph or book actually says. The meaning in all cases must be drawn from the passages themselves. Each doctrine must be derived from the explicit, clear statements of the written Word. The doctrines of the creation of the world in six days by God, or the doctrine of eternal damnation in hell cannot, for example, be determined by the doctrine of justification by faith. Similarly, what the Sacraments are, and how they should be used, and what their benefits are, cannot be determined from the doctrine of justification. We cannot say: since we are justified, not by works, but by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, therefore we must baptize all nations, or, therefore we must institute a meal of remembrance. The Sacraments are based on clear words of our Lord that are preserved in Scripture, and not on the doctrine of justification. But, as said above, no doctrines of the Scriptures should be understood in ways that are contrary to the central teaching of the Scriptures. They should be understood in ways that are in keeping with it. Then the Sacraments and the other doctrines are seen to affirm the central teaching. They bring home the Gospel of the justification of the sinner through Jesus Christ in another form.

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn any attempt to displace justification as the central doctrine by sanctification, renewal of life, personal experience, the charismatic gifts, or forms of meditation.
2. We reject and condemn any notion that faith is a work, or meritorious, or that it is decision-making.

3. We reject and condemn any attempt either to deny that justification is objective or to deny that objective justification precedes subjective justification.
4. We reject and condemn any view that after coming to faith in Jesus a person ceases to sin. All Christians are simultaneously justified and sinners (Romans 7:14-21).
5. We reject and condemn any form of religious enthusiasm, suggesting that God works faith directly in people's hearts, apart from the external Word, and apart from the Word in the visible form of the Sacraments.
6. We reject and condemn the notion that the grace by which a person is justified is in him or has been infused into him.
7. We reject and condemn any attempt to derive what is taught in the church solely from justification by faith, instead of from the clear teachings of the Scriptures themselves.
8. We reject and condemn any attempt to criticize insistence on pure teaching in any doctrine of Scripture as 'work-righteousness'.
9. We reject and condemn all attempts that human beings make to teach that their own works and merit may be mingled into the article of justification before God. For the Christian faith is the confidence that we have forgiveness of sins and salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (Acts 10:43).
10. We reject and condemn any attempt to promise the grace of God to men on the basis of their moral efforts.
11. We reject and condemn the doctrine of works in Roman Catholicism, which expressly teaches that good works are necessary to obtain justification.
12. We reject and condemn every form of synergism, which mixes human works, right attitudes, or decisions into the articles of conversion and justification, even though synergists may use terms like 'by faith' and 'by faith alone'. Human beings should not be said to cooperate with God in the kindling of faith.
13. We reject and condemn every form of gospel reductionism, which restricts what is essential and necessary teaching to justification by faith.

## Article 15

### FAITH AND SUPERSTITION

It has become evident that there are opposing views in the church concerning the true nature of the Christian faith and its object. True Christian faith (*fides qua creditur*) was thought of as a sure trust and confidence in the Christ of Scripture, which clings to his atonement, as revealed in the Gospel, for assurance of forgiveness and eternal salvation. This faith is created in us by the work of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God (and Baptism) and is nourished and sustained by the continued use and study of the Word and truth of God, in the Scriptures, as well as by the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as a guarantee that Christ's body was given into death, and his blood was shed for us personally. The historical facts of Christ's life and work, the fulfilment of the Old Testament prophecies in him, his miracles demonstrating his divine powers, his resurrection from the dead as attested by numerous witnesses of his many appearances in the flesh, as well as his visible ascension into heaven, were seen as further confirmation of this faith, specifically so intended by God, as the apostle John writes: 'Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not

written in this book: but these are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name' (John 20:30-31).

This Christian faith rejoiced in, and was further strengthened by, confirming evidence revealed in nature and in the archaeological discoveries that attested the truths of God's revelation in the Bible. While it was never claimed, in fact specifically denied, that faith was based upon such evidence, or in any way needed such evidence as proof, this evidence was seen as confirming evidence, which served to strengthen faith.

In recent years, however, some have objected to such a view and description of faith. They resent the idea of faith being in any way linked to factual evidence in history or in nature. Some have described faith rather as 'a leap into the dark', which is unsupported by any sort of evidence. It is a blind commitment or trust that rests upon no basis in the world of time and space. Some even went so far as to claim that true faith is destroyed by factual evidence of any sort. As soon as one sees or has evidence for what one believes, it is no longer faith but sight, as if faith and sight were mutually exclusive. They pointed to Jesus' words to Thomas: 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed' as confirmation of this view. Others pointed to Jesus' specific words in the same passage: 'Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed', to show that Jesus did not say that faith is destroyed by sight or evidence. Faith was being spoken of almost as if it was of the nature of 'hope', which ceases to be hope as soon as what is hoped for is received. No proper definitions of this 'faith' were offered except to assert that it was quite unsupported by any sort of evidence. It seemed to be its own evidence, and could never be proved or disproved by any factual information or historical evidence whatever.

These two opposing views of faith surfaced in the controversy concerning the inerrancy of Scripture, when some insisted that seemingly contradictory or varying scriptural accounts are really in true harmony with each other and would be seen to be in harmony if Scripture were allowed to interpret itself. But others insisted that the discrepancies or contradictions in Scripture must be acknowledged and allowed to stand. This, they said, is part of the healthy 'tension' or 'dialectic' of the Word. It was asserted that a faith that could live with numerous errors and contradictions in God's Word was much stronger than a faith that insists that God's Word could not contain errors. The former needs no evidence and cannot be undermined by contradictory facts, while the latter is vulnerable in the face of clearly conflicting evidence.

Such a view of faith that is unrelated to factual or historical evidence was seen by many to be of quite a different nature from the faith spoken of by the apostle John (John 20:31). Such a 'blind faith' or 'leap into the dark' was in fact more akin to pagan superstition that has no historical evidence in the world of time and space, and is really an irrational belief or trust in some idea that is quite unrelated to, or unsupported by, factual evidence. And so it was anticipated that this new concept of 'faith', if applied consistently, might well be capable of reducing Christianity to a pagan superstition, couched in Christian terminology.

Still others at times spoke of faith as though it were a power within the believer by which he is enabled to work miracles. If he has sufficient faith he should be able to heal the sick and even raise the dead. Others objected to this view of faith pointing out that faith is rather a means by which man receives the blessings of God, or through which God works to help and bless man. The statement 'Thy faith hath made thee whole' does not imply that the power to heal is in man by virtue of his faith. People came to Jesus to be healed and did not heal themselves by faith.

## AFFIRMATIVE

1. Accordingly we believe, teach, and confess that while all other religions in the world are *abstract* , in the sense that they are a system of beliefs or a trust in religious principles and ideas that have been propagated by some religious thinker or prophet, perhaps claiming special gifts and insight through meditation or visions etc., true Christianity is *concrete* , in the sense that it is a trust in, or commitment to, a person - Jesus Christ - who lived in our concrete world of time and space, in true historical circumstances.
2. We believe that all the basic teachings or doctrines of true Christianity (creation, the fall into sin, the incarnation, the atonement, the resurrection, and the ascension etc.) are real factual events that occurred, not in the mind of men or God, but in the objective world of time and space.
3. We believe and teach that true Christian faith, which trusts in the historic person of Christ Jesus and his atoning work, has its object in a truly historical person and truly historical facts that occurred in real history (John 20:31).
4. We believe therefore that the true Christian faith, inasmuch as it is based on these truly historical events and circumstances, is directly linked with, and supported by, historical evidence as presented by the Scriptures (John 20:31).
5. We believe that true Christian faith is not a head-knowledge or intellectual acceptance of the historical facts of Christ's work of redemption, but rather a trust in and reliance upon these truths which entrusts itself to the love and grace of God. It is possible to believe many of the historical facts of redemption, including the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, without having true Christian faith at all.
6. We believe that true Christianity, as revealed in Scripture, is rooted in, and bound up with, the historical events of the Gospel, and these are part and parcel of the Gospel itself, which cannot somehow be 'distilled off, or lifted away from those historical facts, to become the basis or object of some abstract faith, which is then independent from, or unrelated to, those facts.
7. We believe, accordingly, that every attempt to deny, or call into question the truthfulness or the reality of the historical facts of the Gospel, is to attack the very basis or object of true Christian faith.
8. We believe that true Christian faith is not therefore a 'leap into the dark', or a blind trust in unsupported abstract ideas and principles, but it is a sure trust and confidence in a truly historic person (Christ Jesus) supported by numerous historic events that occurred in real history as revealed in Scripture (John 20:31).
9. We believe that, because of this concrete basis or object of true Christian faith, it is right and proper to speak of faith as being supported or affirmed by clear historical or factual evidence, which attests to the truths of Scripture upon which it is based (John 20:31).
10. We believe that, unlike true Christian faith, superstition is a blind trust or irrational belief or fear that is unsupported by any historical facts or evidence in the concrete world of time and space. Such superstition is irrational and satanic in origin, and is not concerned with evidence either to prove or disprove it. It is truly a 'leap into the dark'.
11. We believe that a so-called 'faith' that has all the characteristics of irrational superstition, is better called by that name, and should not be confused with the true

Christian faith, even though it operates with, or is couched in, biblical terms and expressions.

12. We believe that it was the deliberate purpose of God in dealing with his people throughout the ages, and especially of Christ in his life and work on earth, to see to it that the faith of his followers was not a mere irrational superstition, but a sound faith and trust well supported by concrete evidence in the time and space in which we live (cf. incarnation and the resurrection appearances).
13. We believe that it belongs to the very nature of true Christianity (that Christ became our substitute to fulfil God's justice towards sinners) that it cannot be merely abstract, but must be concretely grounded in historical fact.
14. We believe and teach that true Christian faith, worked in man by the Holy Spirit, is a trust or confidence through which he then apprehends or receives the blessings of God (Acts 14:9).
15. We believe that this true faith may, in certain circumstances, move man to call upon the name of Christ to heal or do wonders not by any power in man, but by the power of God (Acts 3:6-16).

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn the belief that true Christian faith is a mere intellectual acceptance of the historical facts relating to the Gospel.
2. We reject and condemn the belief that true Christianity is an abstract system of beliefs and principles, and that true faith is a trust in, or acceptance of, such beliefs.
3. We reject and condemn the notion that true Christianity could be somehow 'distilled from' or separated from the historical facts and details in which it has been revealed to us in Scripture, and that true faith could cling to such an abstract 'gospel' without accepting the factual details of the Gospel accounts.
4. We reject the view that there is, or could be, a Christ who can be separated from his incarnation in the Virgin Mary or his human life and work in Palestine, as recorded in Scripture, and that such a Christ could be the object of Christian faith and trust.
5. We reject and condemn the view that true faith is not related to, or in any way supported by the historical facts which are revealed in Scripture.
6. We reject the pagan superstition that true Christian faith is a 'leap into the dark', or a blind acceptance, of abstract truths without factual evidence, or that true Christian faith can be based upon personal feelings which can neither be proved nor disproved.
7. We reject the foolish notion that a strong faith can deny many of the truths of Scripture, or be unaffected by manifest errors and contradictions in the Word of God. We reject the irrational superstition that true faith is of such a nature that it is destroyed by sight, or by affirmative evidence supporting the teachings of Scripture.
8. We reject the argument that Jesus' words to Thomas: 'Blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed', indicate that faith cannot be supported by evidence.
9. We reject and condemn the view that faith is a power in man by which he is enabled to work miracles or do other wonders. All true miracles are done, not by any power residing in man, but by the power of God, residing in God. By faith men at times called upon God to manifest that power when this was to his glory (Acts 3:6-16; 4:7-10; 14:15).

## Article 16

### LAW AND GOSPEL

#### The Distinction Between Law and Gospel

While the proper distinction between *Law* and *Gospel* is spelled out carefully in the Lutheran Confessions yet there has been no small confusion of this matter within our church. Scripture presents both the *Law* and the *Gospel* as doctrines of God and therefore as good and holy.

Yet, within certain circles of the church it appears that the Law is regarded with a certain amount of dislike and even disgust and revulsion, while the Gospel is embraced and readily accepted with enthusiasm, even though they are both doctrines of one and the same Lord.

Much confusion has been caused in the church also by a confusion of the laws and commands of God that are part of the holy, immutable will of God with the laws and commands of God that were given to particular people for a particular time. Instead of making a careful investigation to determine which laws and commands God intended to apply only to particular people, or only for a certain time, it appears that many simply consider all laws and commands together as not applying to Christians since they are under 'the freedom of the gospel'.

Perhaps the greatest cause of confusion has been the adage 'the law always condemns'. While it is true that the law always condemns, also in its third use, it is wrong to assume that the Law only condemns, so that it cannot function as a guide of what is pleasing to God with the power and motivation of God-pleasing action coming from the Gospel.

Still more confusion is apparent in this, that it frequently appears that anyone who insists very strongly and rigidly upon any position is regarded by some as a 'legalist'. In this case the term 'law' has come to mean something like 'inflexible', while the 'gospel', on the other hand, has taken on the meaning of 'accommodating' or 'compromising'.

Even worse is the further distortion of meaning in which whatever is clear and precise, lucid, and of exact definition, is said to be 'legalistic', while the term 'evangelical' is applied to thinking that is vague, uncertain or confused. In this way, then, 'the freedom of the gospel' becomes a very vague licence to 'do your own thing', while anything that would restrict or define behaviour or beliefs to any precise or definite standard is despised as 'legalism'. Needless to say, all confessionalism from this point of view becomes 'legalism'.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe that for the peace of the Church it is important to have some unanimity in the use of biblical and theological terms. We are fully aware of the wider and narrower uses of the terms 'Law' and 'Gospel' in the Holy Scriptures and as also pointed out in the Lutheran Confessions ( *Formula of Concord* , V 4-5). But we would urge theologians and people of the church to use the terms carefully in the strict senses as defined in the *Formula of Concord* :

'...we unanimously believe, teach and confess that the Law is a Christian doctrine which reveals the righteous and immutable will of God, [and] shows how man ought to be disposed in his nature, thoughts, words, and deeds in order to be pleasing and acceptable to God ... (Formula of Concord , Solid Declaration V.17).

...everything that reproaches sin, is and belongs to, the Law, whose peculiar office is to reprove sin and to lead to the knowledge of sins. Romans 3:20; 7:7 ( *Formula of Concord* , V.17).

...the Gospel is properly a doctrine which teaches what man should believe, that he may obtain the forgiveness of sins with God ... ( *Formula of Concord* , V.21).

For everything that comforts, that offers the favour and grace of God to transgressors of the Law, is, and is properly called the Gospel, a good and joyful message that God will not punish sins, but forgive them for Christ's sake. ( *Formula of Concord* , V.21).'

2. We believe, teach and confess that it is of the utmost importance for the Church of God that the Law and the Gospel are properly divided, distinguished and applied to all men. Both have their function and need among unbelievers and believers alike. The Lutheran Confessions teach this at great length. We would only re-emphasize this again for the Church in our times.
3. We believe, teach, and confess that the Law of God is intended for man's good or for his welfare, so that by following the prescriptions of the Law man will be doing that which is best suited to his own interests and to the interests of his fellowman.

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn every failure properly to distinguish between Law and Gospel in their nature, function or application, so that the two are confounded: the Gospel is used to rebuke sin and to instruct in the will of God for our righteousness and piety, while the law is softened to mere expressions of divine wishes or optional preferences.
2. We reject and condemn the modern distortions of Law and Gospel whereby the term 'law' is associated with that which is repulsive instead of that which is holy, and the Gospel alone is regarded as attractive (Romans 7:22).
3. We reject and condemn further the modern distortion of the terms 'Law' and 'Gospel' in which the terms 'Law' and 'legal' etc. are associated with that which is fixed, rigid, and inflexible, while the terms 'gospel' and 'evangelical' etc., are understood to refer to that which is compromising, or accommodating of different views or positions.
4. Similarly we reject and condemn the modern confusion which applies the terms 'Law' and 'legalistic' to that which is clear, lucid, and precisely defined or logically set out, while the terms 'gospel' and 'evangelical' refer to that which is vague, unclear or poorly defined. Strangely, in this usage, however, the term 'legalistic' carries with it a stigma of disapproval, while the terms 'gospel' and 'evangelical' meet with approval.
5. We reject and condemn every view of God's Law which sees the instructions and commandments of the Law as basically a set of rules that God has given to regulate man's behaviour chiefly to keep himself happy, rather than for man's benefit, as when the master may make rules to regulate his dog's behaviour inside the house primarily for his own benefit, rather than in the interests of the animal. We reject and condemn that view which sees God's Law in this way, as if it were merely for God's benefit rather than for man's.
6. We reject and condemn as a dangerous deception of the devil every use of the expression the 'freedom of the gospel' or its equivalent which would suggest that we are free to 'do our own thing' or which would link the freedom that we have in Christ with a freedom from all restraints and restrictions of thought or behaviour rather than with the freedom from sin, death, hell, and the curse of the Law.

## The Third Use of the Law

The Third Use of the Law is that function of the Law which teaches Christians what the holy will of God is and how they should conform their lives to the will of God. Article VI of the *Formula of Concord* shows how the Law of God is to be used with diligence among Christians, not only to show them their sins but also to inform them of the holy immutable will of God so that by the help of God's Holy Spirit they may be able to conform their lives to that which is pleasing to God. In spite of this, however, and in spite of the lip service that has been paid to our confessions, there has been a great deal of confusion in the church caused by those who, in practice and in theology, actually reject the third use of the Law. What they are saying amounts not merely to this, that Christians are no longer under the curse of the Law, but to this, that Christians are no longer under obligation to the cursed Law. The first concept - the curse of the Law - still views the Law of God as holy and righteous and desirable in every way, but recognizes that, because man is unable to fulfil the Law, he is condemned by it. The second concept, however, - the cursed law - views the Law as something tyrannical, something repulsive or loathsome, which, thank God, Christians need no longer be bothered with, since they are now under 'the freedom of the gospel'.

There are those in the church, who, in their speaking or writing, assert that the Law no longer applies to Christians, since they are not under the Law but under grace. Some have correctly maintained that when the Holy Spirit dwells in the hearts of believers he fills them with love for God and their fellowmen. But then they go on to say that this love regulates their behaviour in such a way that they no longer need the written Law or commandments to guide them in the path of holiness, for they simply follow the 'law of love' in their hearts.

From this position, it appears that, when God's children are asked to be led and guided by the written Law and commandments of Scripture, this is tantamount to removing them from under 'freedom of the gospel' and placing them back again under the 'cursed law'.

While most would pay at least lip service to the third use of the Law as expounded at length in the sixth article of the *Formula of Concord*, yet when it comes to the practical issues of life or presentation in their teaching and writings, some speak as if the Christian does not daily need the Law for guidance and instruction in the holy immutable will of God. They imply that when a person is under the grace of God he is not under obligation to the Law of God and so has no further need for it.

The point of division between us, then, appears to be in the matter of sincerity and consistency in the truth rather than in any deliberate rejection of the truth.

### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that also the regenerate children of God need the Law of God, as has been amply shown in the sixth article of the *Formula of Concord*, on the basis of Scripture. They have indeed been freed from the curse of the Law in the sense that all of their sins have been washed away and they are clothed in the garment of Christ's perfect righteousness, the Law no longer condemns them and curses them to hell. The Law of God, as the holy immutable will of God, however, is just as valid, authoritative and applicable to Christians, to set forth what is the will of God for our lives.
2. We confess with the *Formula of Concord* (Article VI,9) that the truly regenerate child of God needs not only the daily instruction, admonition, warning, and threatenings of God's Law, but frequently also the chastisements of the Law, so that he may the more urgently follow the Spirit of God (Psalm 119:71; Hebrews 12:5-12).



3. We believe, teach, and confess that the Christian's need for the Law of God in its third use is connected with the continuing presence of his old sinful flesh, rather than with the appearance of obvious grievous sins. As the old sinful flesh is continually with him, so the Law of God should be the subject of his continual meditation, as the Psalmist says (Psalm 1:2).
4. We believe, teach, and confess that the holy, immutable will of God should be the Christian's guide by which he determines what is right and wrong for him. We believe that the Holy Spirit of God himself instructs God's children with the written Law of God for their sanctification, as the apostle says: '... for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works' (2 Timothy 3:16-17).
5. We believe, teach, and confess that the truly regenerate child of God will delight in the Law of God and love to use it as his criterion or standard of judgment so that he will happily try to live according to it, as Scripture says: 'Blessed is the man whose delight is in the Law of the Lord ...' (cf. Psalm 119:16; 23-24; 40; 47; 92; 97; 113; 127; 154; 163; 167; 174).
6. We believe, teach, and confess that it is necessary clearly to distinguish the proper functions of the Law and the Gospel in the Christian life of sanctification. Not the Law, but the Gospel (after preparation by the Law) is that which regenerates our hearts. Not the Gospel but the Law (in its strict sense) is used by the Holy Spirit to show and to teach the true children of God what the God-pleasing works are in which they should walk, and how they should conform their lives to his will. While the Law is neither the source, nor the motivating cause of our good works and sanctification, yet it alone, and not the Gospel, is the standard or criterion according to which it is determined what truly good works and a sanctified Christian life are. The Law shows us what to do and not to do. The Gospel, on the other hand, shows us what Christ has done for our salvation. We dare never turn the Gospel into another Law by regarding it as a criterion of good works. This is done wherever the third use of the Law is neglected.
7. We believe, teach, and confess that because of the continuing presence of his deceitful old sinful flesh the believer in Christ needs the external written Law of God for his guidance, lest he should be led into false ways and self-chosen works of service, piety or worship, imagining, in all sincerity, that he is being guided by the Spirit of God. We are only too well aware of the many foolish, erroneous, and even evil things, which have been done under the pretext, or with the sincere conviction, of the Holy Spirit's guidance.
8. We believe, teach, and confess that only those may be called good works - also for believers in Christ - which conform to God's immutable will revealed in his Law and commands in Scripture. No matter how well-intentioned they may be, or with what love they may have been motivated, such works cannot be called good works which do not conform to the Law of God. Not the Holy Spirit himself, but only evil spirits, will motivate and urge Christians to perform works that do not conform to the requirements of God's will.
9. We acknowledge that, while God's will written and revealed in the Scriptures is the Christian's only sure guide and criterion of good works and behaviour that is pleasing to God, yet in complex situations it may not always be clear precisely what the immutable will of God is. In such cases the Christian will try to apply the meaning and the principles of God's written Law as faithfully as he can in the situation to

determine how he should act. In this way the Law is still being used as his criterion. He does not suddenly operate without reference to any Law at all under 'the freedom of the gospel'. That is meaningless. While a Christian is not under the curse of the Law, nevertheless he is never without the Law, but always in the Law, and he lives and works in the Law of the Lord, yet doing nothing from the constraints of the Law (*Formula of Concord*, VI.18).

10. We believe, teach, and confess that, while the Holy Spirit creates love in the hearts of God's children through the Gospel, both towards God and towards their fellowmen, yet this love is never the criterion of their good works, but only the motive for them. Love in man is a God-given disposition, attitude, or frame of mind. Of itself love has no precise or specific directions. Love is subjective. It is in the heart of man. Those who would follow love without Law are the victims of subjectivism (*Schwaermerei*). The Christian, on the other hand, will follow Law, motivated by God's love to him.
11. We believe that when the true, regenerate child of God is led by the Spirit of God, motivated, in a heart filled with thanks and gratitude, by God's wonderful grace, to conform his works and his behaviour to the standard of God's will, then those works which conform to God's Law are not properly called 'the works of the Law', but rather 'the fruits of the Spirit,' as Scripture calls them.

## NEGATIVE

1. We reject and condemn, as a most dangerous delusion of the devil, every suggestion that because Christians are 'not under the Law but under grace' therefore they do not need the written Law of God to guide or instruct them in their life of sanctification.
2. We reject and condemn, as the voice of our sinful flesh, every feeling of loathing for, and opposition to, the written Law of God, as if it were something repulsive to the child of God, or as if the Gospel but not the Law, is to be loved and desired.
3. While it is true that the Law always accuses (*Lex semper accusat*), for this is its function, yet we reject and condemn as a simplistic and naive misunderstanding of the Law, the notion that the Law only accuses and does not also give us Christians an incentive to follow the leading of God's Spirit, who instructs us with God's Law, as our Confessions declare (*Formula of Concord*, VI,11-12).
4. We reject and condemn every confusion of Law and Gospel in the Christian's life of sanctification whereby either the Law with its threats is made the motive or source of good works, or the Holy Spirit is thought to use the Gospel, and not the Law, to inform and instruct the children of God what the good and acceptable will of God is, and how Christian love should act.
5. We reject and condemn, as a subtle delusion of Satan, the notion that the children of God are so filled with the Holy Spirit that they are guided by the Spirit alone, without the Law, in performing works of loving service to their fellowmen, so that the written commandments of God are considered to be unnecessary, superfluous, or even detrimental and misleading.
6. We reject and condemn any and every suggestion that, since the Law of God can no longer condemn the child of God, therefore he no longer needs to conform his behaviour to the requirements of God's Law.
7. We reject and condemn every suggestion that good Christians generally have no need for the Law and commands of God's Word except when they fall into grievous sins, at which time they need again to be crushed with the full force of the Law. It is a total

confusion to speak of a Christian's now-and-then, irregular, once-in-a-while need for the Law occasioned by his actual and overt sins, rather than to speak of his continual, on-going, constant need for the Law, owing to his inherited sinful nature. No believer in Christ, however pious and holy in outward appearance, is perfectly and completely renewed, but still retains his sinful flesh here on earth. He is a saint but a sinner at the same time ( *simul justus et peccator* ). The sinful flesh opposes the new spiritual life of the believer in Christ, so that he is unable fully to do what he knows to be right and good and to avoid sin, as St. Paul confesses in Romans 7:18-25. For this reason he constantly needs the Law of God.

8. We reject and condemn every suggestion that the regenerate children of God do not need to be guided in their Christian lives by the written laws of God ('for the letter killeth') but rather by the 'law of love', or by the 'love' which the Holy Spirit creates in their hearts. To place 'love' in contrast with , or in opposition to, the Law and commands of God in this way is a most pernicious and dangerous error. On the contrary, Scripture says: 'Love is the fulfilling of the Law' (Romans 13:10).
9. We reject and condemn the use of the phrase 'law of love' when it is meant to denote some other law than God's holy immutable will revealed in the Scriptures. As if this 'law of love' somehow inheres within the Christian, generated by the Spirit, and is above the written laws of God, so that when a Christian lives by 'the law of love' he does not need to concern himself with written laws and commands in the Scriptures.
10. Similarly we reject and condemn as blasphemy every concept of the 'freedom of the gospel' by which a believer is thought to be freed from the Law in the sense that he is now free under the Gospel to do what God's will has forbidden, so that he has no further need for guidance from the Law.
11. We categorically reject and condemn any suggestion that life today is much too complicated to be guided by the written Law of God, so that now we as Christians can only operate under 'the freedom of the gospel'. Such a position, in the final analysis, is either the humanist philosophy of 'doing your own thing', or the enthusiasm ( *Schwaermerei* ) of imagining that God leads us from hour to hour by direct revelation without reference to his written Word.

## Article 17

### THE CHURCH

In the early church the chief issues confronting the church were the doctrines of the Trinity and the relationship between God and man in the one person Jesus Christ. At the time of the Reformation the chief issue had shifted to the question, 'How can I have a gracious God? Am I justified partly by my own merits or works, or solely by the grace of God in Jesus Christ?'

At the present time there are two basic issues facing the church: the authority of Scripture over against the claims of humanism, ecumenical compromise and liberalism, and the nature of the unity of the church. The issue of the nature of the unity of the church is raised in part by the modern ecumenical movement, which has the goal of an undivided external Christendom, with the expectation that thereby the offence of competing claims to represent the true church may be removed and the 'world believe' that the Father has sent Jesus. It is raised partly by the fact that modern means of communication have made church bodies more aware of each other, and by the resulting openness to pressures towards doctrinal compromise in order to circumvent, or declare irrelevant, long-standing doctrinal differences.

The spirit of the times makes people sceptical about claims that the Scriptures are clear and that any particular church body is able to claim to possess the full truth of God's word. A good deal of use is seen of a principle we call 'gospel reductionism', asserting in various ways that only the central core of the proclamation of the Gospel needs to be present. Attempts to resist tendencies towards external union where there is inadequate agreement are then dubbed 'legalism', or 'work-righteousness'. In other words, the central teaching of justification by faith alone ('without works') is misunderstood as justification by faith alone in the sense that justification by faith is the sole requirement for church unity, without other related doctrines. So insistence on doctrine is vilified as work-righteousness.

There are strong pressures to engage in various forms of so-called 'expressions of oneness in the faith' in joint proclamation, joint worship and prayer, joint celebrations of the Lord's Supper, and joint church work, and to take up membership in ecumenical organizations before there is full unity on the basis of the Word of God. In Lutheran circles particularly there is a reluctance to use the language of the 'marks of the church', and reluctance to apply directly scriptural passages that deal with the confession of the truth and the avoidance of error.

### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that there is a close relationship between the doctrine of the church, the incarnation of the Son of God, and the incarnate Son of God's active and passive obedience. He suffered, died, and rose again for sinners. The church is essentially those persons who through faith belong to the Lord. Even the English word 'church' is etymologically connected with the Greek word that means 'belonging to the Lord'. They are people who have despaired of their own righteousness before God and believe that God forgives their sins for Christ's sake.
2. We believe, teach, and confess that the church is in the strict sense hidden (Luke 17:20-21; Romans 14:17). In the proper sense of the term the church is composed only of believers (Acts 5:14; 26:18; Ephesians 2:19-20). This hiddenness is true also of other major aspects of the Christian faith. We affirm the resurrection of Christ as an article of faith, though we do not see the risen Lord; we affirm the efficacy of Baptism, though we see only the element of water; we affirm God's justification of sinners by faith in Christ without works, though we see only sinners and sin; and we affirm the real presence of the body and blood of Jesus in the Lord's Supper, though we do not taste, or otherwise perceive them, except that we hear the words telling us that they are present. The members of the church, though justified, are at the same time sinners. The one church is hidden because the body of Christ consists of the full number of those whom God has chosen in eternity in Christ to salvation, even when we see mainly the divisive effects of sin. The church is an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in people's hearts. Only God knows those who are his (1 Kings 8:39; Acts 1:24; 2 Timothy 2:19). We may accept in love any person's assertion that he believes in Christ, but we cannot say as an article of faith who the members of the church are. As we cannot assert as an article of faith precisely who those are who have faith and are justified, so the church in its fullness, though it actually exists in the world, and though it is not a mere abstraction or imaginary company, is not an entity that is plainly visible to us. Hypocrites, false believers and temporary believers are unavoidably mixed with it in this world of sin. There must be a clear distinction between the strict definition of the church as it is, and the church as it appears to human observation ( *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* , Articles VII and VIII, 3-20).

3. We believe, teach, and confess that the church is by its nature one. It is the one mystical body of Christ, the bride of Christ, heavenly Jerusalem, the fullness of him who fills all in all. This unity is a gift of God, not a construction of theologians or administrators. The reconciling death of Christ brings believers into unity. The real unity of Christians lies in the fact that they are 'in Christ'. Christ is not divided. This unity is based on the fact that Jesus is in the Father and the Father in him (John 17:21) - that is, the unity of the church is an expression of the unity of the Holy Trinity. The church is one in faith and Baptism because it derives its life from the one Spirit, the one Lord, and the one God and Father of all. Christ's bride is even now washed, justified, cleansed, and really one, though her real unity and glory will be apparent only when Christ returns.
4. We believe, teach, and confess that the passage on the unity of the church in John 17 should be correctly understood, as it has often been misunderstood and misapplied, particularly in the interests of so-called 'ecumenical' gatherings. It is an article of faith that the one Christian church has always been, and will always be, one. Jesus' prayer in John 17, 'that they may all be one', has always been fulfilled, in spite of outward divisions between Christians. There has always been a unity of all believers in Christ through the apostolic word. Its unity, like the unity between the Father and the Son, is real, but hidden in this world. We hold that the words 'that the world may believe' in John 17:21 either refer to the situation at the end of the world, when unbelievers will have to acknowledge, however grudgingly, that the Father has sent Jesus, or to the possibility for people in the world to be led out of the world by a change of heart. 'World' in John consistently refers to the unbelieving people who hate Christ and persecute his followers. In this sense the world will never believe. When people become believers they are no longer of the world. Besides, the idea that a man-made external unity will be the cause of the conversion of the world to the Lord Jesus Christ is a travesty of the doctrine of conversion, which is solely God's work.
5. We believe, teach, and confess that the unity that exists between all those who are justified and the Father and the Son is not visible, just as the unity between the Father and the Son is not an object of sight (John 17:21). Nor can the unity of the one church be made visible. In fact, misplaced emphasis on the visibility of the one church can lead to work-righteousness; and the notion that the mere dropping by denominations of their denominational barriers will convert the unbelieving world to Christianity rests on a wrong view of conversion. Even where unity is established on the basis of agreement in the pure Gospel and Sacraments, and so is fully legitimate, that unity is not a restoration of the unity of the body of Christ. Nor would it be if every Christian denomination reached unity with the rest. Christ is never divided and the unity of the church is a gift of grace.
6. We believe, teach, and confess that this one church is *holy* because God, who justifies sinners who believe in Jesus, also sanctifies them or sets them apart; and they also begin to reflect, however imperfectly, their new birth and renewal, in holy lives. We expect to see not only the results of sin, but also the fruits of the Gospel. This church is *catholic* or *universal* because it includes all believers of all times and places, both those still living in the church militant, scattered throughout the whole world, and those who have died in faith and are in the church triumphant. The term 'catholic' should refer only to the hidden, universal church. The word 'catholic' should be deliberately dissociated from the name 'Roman Catholic'. The church is *apostolic* in two ways: it confesses the faith of the apostles, and it shares Christ's universal mission through the same Holy Spirit who filled and guided the apostles.

7. We believe, teach, and confess that this church, which is now hidden under the cross, will be fully disclosed to our sight at Jesus' second coming as the church triumphant, and will remain for ever (Colossians 3:3-4). 'The gates of hell will not prevail against it' (Matthew 16:18).
8. We believe, teach, and confess that the Gospel and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are the visible marks of the one holy Christian church, which is otherwise hidden. This is so because it is through these that Christ comes to us according to his promise. Through them the Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies individual members of the church and keeps them with Jesus Christ in the one true faith (Romans 10:17; Ephesians 5:26; 1 Corinthians 10:17; 12:13; 1 Peter 1:23-25). The visible marks of the church are the evidence of the presence of the hidden church, because of God's promise that his Word of the Gospel is effective, and will not return to him void, but will accomplish what he pleases (Isaiah 55:10-11). Wherever the Gospel is rightly taught, the church is present. Through the Gospel and the Sacraments, as efficacious instruments, the Holy Spirit creates and preserves faith, and joins individuals to the body of Christ. The church is there even though it cannot be said with precision who the individual believers are. The Word and the Sacraments are effective means of grace because of the promise of Christ, and not because of any human fitness or uprightness (See *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* VII-VIII, 5, 20; XIV, 27).
9. We believe, teach, and confess that the distinction between Law and Gospel must also be applied to the way in which we speak about the marks of the church. While much of Jesus' teaching was Law, yet the proclamation of the Law was not Jesus' real work. The Law as Christians teach it, is, in many areas, little different from the ethical maxims of non-Christians. The distinctive marks of the one church are the Gospel of salvation (without works, apart from the Law) and the Sacraments ( *Formula of Concord* , *Solid Declaration* V,11-12; *Epitome* V,10; *Augsburg Confession* VII).
10. We believe, teach, and confess that it is also proper to speak of local churches (in the plural) as churches of God in particular places (Matthew 18:17; Acts 2:42-47; 4:4-32; 8:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 16:19; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:2). The one church is there in essence, if not in extent. The New Testament uses the word 'church' also of local congregations and of groups of congregations within cities and provinces. The term 'church' refers to the believers assembled to hear the Word, celebrate the Sacraments, and declare the forgiveness of sins (the power of the keys). In its outward communion there may be unbelievers that are not, in the strict sense, an integral part of the local church. It is the will of God that believers in particular localities who recognize a unity in the pure marks of the church should assemble, hear the Word, celebrate the Sacraments, and strengthen discipleship by practising love, fellowship, corporate prayer, and admonition.
11. We acknowledge that the term 'church' is also used of visible church bodies with distinctive confessions, forms of worship, polity, and of organization. All visible denominations, like other human societies, are fellowships of outward rites. However, though they are properly called 'churches', they are mixed churches, churches in the looser sense (Matthew 13:24-30, 38-43, 47-50). They are 'church' only in the broad or imprecise sense. Strictly, unbelieving and unfaithful members are 'church' in name only.
12. We acknowledge that sometimes unbelieving and disobedient people are given responsibility in the church. However, we believe, teach, and confess that the Gospel

that is preached by them, the absolution of Christ that they proclaim, and the Sacraments they administer are nevertheless efficacious because of Christ's authority and institution. Because the Gospel is effective and efficacious, all visible churches that proclaim the Gospel are correctly designated by the term 'church', even though there is error mixed with the proclamation of the saving Word of truth (Luke 17:16; John 4:25), and we do not refuse to call ministers of all churches 'ministers of the Gospel'. Where there are ordained women, contrary to God's express command (1 Corinthians 14:33-37; 1 Timothy 2:11-14) we do not say that the Gospel and Sacraments are ineffectual. The Gospel is Gospel wherever it is preached, and the Sacraments are what they are because of Christ's institution. However, we would refuse to hear the Word when women preach in churches, and we would refuse to receive the Sacraments there, because we cannot condone the disobedience that is involved.

13. We believe, teach, and confess that an important aspect of the correct use of the doctrine of the church is the concern that the visible denomination to which we belong has the visible marks of the one church in their purity, that is, that the Gospel is purely taught, and the Sacraments rightly administered there. Where this is so, we believe, teach, and confess that it is proper to speak of a true visible church. The pure marks of the church are alone determinative of what acceptable church unity is.
14. We believe, teach, and confess that the New Testament does not prescribe any particular form of church polity ( *Smalcald Articles* , Part II, Article IV, 9). Though we acknowledge that there is a close connection between justification and sanctification, we deny that visible holiness or discipline of life is necessarily a mark of a true visible church ( *Augsburg Confession* Articles VII and VIII, 10-13; *Formula of Concord* , S.D . XII, 34). On the other hand, we are at the same time critical of any merely formal subscription to doctrinal statements, because the pure teaching of the Gospel entails correct doctrinal practice and discipline.
15. We believe, teach, and confess that churches that are not in full agreement may engage in cooperation in external things where the confession of the truth is not necessarily at stake. These may include such things as the joint production of bible translations, church music, or a joint protest against a current social injustice.
16. We believe, teach, and confess that unity in the one holy Christian church as a gift of God exists wherever the Gospel is preached purely and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution (Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 4:3-4). Wherever continued co-operation in the preaching of the Gospel, and fellowship in worship and in the Lord's Supper exist, there is a witness to the world of unity in the faith, and a profession of church fellowship. We therefore acknowledge that we use the term 'fellowship' in two distinct senses. The one holy church is a spiritual fellowship or communion of all believers in Jesus Christ of all times and places, and includes the elect angels and the departed believers with the Lord in heaven. Already now the members of the church have fellowship with the Father, with Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit, and with one another, in mystic union. All believers are all one with their Lord and with one another (Romans 12:5; 1 John 1:3; *Apology* VII-VIII, 3). When the church triumphant is revealed in glory this fellowship will be visible as one (Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; Hebrews 12:22-23; 1 Peter 2:5). This fellowship is an article of faith, not of demonstration. On the other hand, church fellowship is the joining of Christians to proclaim and hear the Gospel, celebrate and receive the Lord's Supper, worship and pray together. It is based on external confession and public

doctrine. Whether such church fellowship is orthodox is not established by its mere name or outward subscription to an orthodox creed, but by the doctrine that is actually taught in its pulpits, its theological seminaries, and in its publications. Church fellowship rests on the marks of the church. That is the same basis as that on which the spiritual fellowship or spiritual unity of true believers rests. Church fellowship is proper and legitimate where it rests on the full unity in the pure marks of the church.

17. We assert that refusal to accept and believe matters that are taught in Scripture for our acceptance is divisive of church fellowship, for then the purity of the marks of the church is affected. Rebellion against the authority of Scripture is a rejection of the organic foundation of the faith. External matters such as details of history, geography or scientific interest, or differences in exegesis that do not affect the central doctrine of justification or the authority of Scripture ought not to be church divisive.
18. We believe, teach, and confess that church fellowship and membership in church organizations involves full co- responsibility for each other's doctrine and practice. The practice of fellowship presupposes agreement in the pure doctrine of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments. Where agreement exists, there is an obligation to acknowledge it publicly and to practise it. Where it does not exist, there is an obligation to witness to the truth of God, and to seek the agreement that is prerequisite for church fellowship. We reject the notion that there may be degrees of fellowship in proportion to the degree of agreement. We seek unity of doctrine as prerequisite to fellowship in worship and Sacraments ( *Augsburg Confession* VII; *Formula of Concord, S.D Rule and Norm* , 1, 14; X, 31; *Ep i tome* X, 7). Unity of doctrine must be rooted in an acceptance of justification by faith alone, as it is related to all areas of doctrinal teaching of the church.
19. We believe, teach, and confess that the essential task of the church is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ. All believers have the power of the keys as royal priests, and have the duty to proclaim God's reconciliation in Christ to the world, and to plead with people in the name of Christ to be reconciled to God (Matthew 28:17-20; John 20:2 2-23; 1 Corinthians 3:21-2 2; 1 Peter 2:9; *Tractate* 24, 66-67). This power of the keys was not originally vested in certain individuals or bodies, such as the Pope or bishops or councils. All believers should be urged to use their diverse gifts for the common good of the church and for the mission of the church. All believers have the right and duty to supervise the public administration of the office of the keys that is performed in their name (Colossians 4:17). All believers have the right and the duty to judge and decide questions of doctrine according to the Scriptures (1 Peter 4:11; 1 John 4:1). We believe, teach, and confess that Christians have the duty to testify to the world the great things that God has done for them, to be what they already are: the salt of the earth, new creatures in Christ, a city set on a hill. In a world where all kinds of voices clamour for attention, Christians' credibility, which earns for them the right to speak, is the renewed life that God works within, a living faith that shows itself in works of love, and the care and concern they show, whatever the cost, for all kinds of people in all kinds of need. The love that members of the church have for other human beings shows them to be Christ's disciples.
20. We believe, teach, and confess that though the church has the duty to preach the Law, this is not the distinctive task of the church. We believe, teach, and confess the doctrine of the two kingdoms (Matthew 22:21; John 18:36; Acts 5:29). The church's concern is with spiritual things, the Word of God, and people's salvation from sin, death, and the devil. The concern of the state is with physical things, earthly



dominion, and political activity. Because Christians are members of both kingdoms, members of the church should, as citizens, do all in their power to preserve legislation that is in line with the moral law. However, the church ought to leave to the civil government the task of directing the affairs of the state. The church should resist the idea that the church should be in the vanguard of social reconstruction, and should continue to oppose a view that the Gospel should be the source of laws in society. If members of the church are oppressed and persecuted for their witness to the Gospel, they must keep on bearing witness and bear the cross. Violence and resistance to the authorities established by God in the state must be avoided for conscience' sake ( *Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope* , 31).

21. We believe, teach, and confess that it is the duty of Christians to endeavour to keep and seek unity in the Gospel through agreement in the pure marks of the church, and we affirm that it is our first priority to strengthen bonds with confessional Lutherans elsewhere in the world. We have the duty to support the truth wherever we find it, and to strengthen our own and others' confession where it is deficient; for the clarity and the sufficiency of Scripture clearly imply that the truth in all matters that apply to salvation can be known and confessed. Dialogue and prayer are necessary for the achievement of God-pleasing unity.
22. We believe, teach, and confess that the essential message of the Gospel is unchangeable. However, the way in which Christians do their task needs to be attuned to the special needs of people in their particular societies. Churches, as fellowships of outward ties and rites, have the constant task of seeing to it that the pure Gospel and the Sacraments as Christ instituted them are maintained.
23. We believe, teach, and confess that the promotion of real agreement in the Gospel implies also the need to reject error and heresy. God has ordained that his Word only, without the admixture of human doctrine, should be taught and believed (John 8:31-32; 1 Timothy 6:3-4; 1 Peter 4:11). The distinctive doctrines that set particular denominations apart from us are the counterparts of the heresies specified also in the New Testament, though sometimes in changed guise. Therefore the commands in the Scriptures to beware, mark, and avoid persistent errorists, and those who by their external membership adhere to error, must be applied without any attempt to soften the rebuke. All Christians should discriminate between orthodox and heterodox church bodies, and if they have strayed into heterodox church bodies, they should leave them. If we refuse fellowship that does not mean that we arrogate to ourselves the right to decide who will be in heaven or hell. That remains the Lord's prerogative. The apostles also refused fellowship to people who professed to be Christians but taught 'another gospel, which is not another'. Our determination of fellowship depends on objective doctrinal tests, as in such passages as Matthew 7 :15-16; 28:20; John 8:31-32; Acts 2:42; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 16:20-23; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Galatians 1:6-9; 5:9; 1 Timothy 1:20; 5:22; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 2:17-21; 1 John 4:1-6; 2 John 10-11. It is the duty of Christians to try the spirits, by doctrinal tests (1 John 4:1-6). Condemnations and judgments on a particular person's salvation are strictly left to the Lord. Attempts should be made to distinguish weak brothers and sisters from persistent errorists, who hold to their self-chosen error in spite of admonition (Romans 14:1-15:6; Titus 3:10). A church does not forfeit its orthodox character through the casual intrusion of errors, provided that these are combated and removed by means of doctrinal discipline (Acts 20:30; 1 Timothy 1:3).

24. We believe, teach, and confess the practice of close communion. This was the practice of the church from its earliest times. Those who partake of the Lord's Supper should be baptized, should be able to discern the presence of the Lord's body and blood, should hold the other doctrines of the Gospel purely, should live a life that is in keeping with their Christian profession, and should be reconciled with those with whom they commune. The frequent sharing of the one bread and the one cup of the Lord's Supper is a glorious demonstration of unity in the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:17). The Lord's Supper should not be offered by Lutherans to members of churches with which there is no agreement in the Gospel and in the Sacraments (Romans 16:17, cf. 16:1-16; 1 Corinthians 16:20-23; Galatians 1:6-9). Truthful confession also requires that Lutherans should refuse to receive the Lord's Supper at the altars of churches with which there is no agreement in the pure marks of the church.
25. We believe, teach, and confess that proper fellowship in prayer rests on the same basis as altar and pulpit fellowship, namely, the pure marks of the church. Prayer fellowship with official representatives of churches that do not teach the Gospel in its purity ought therefore to be declined. There are some private and some public situations where prayer with other Christians is not sinful because there is no denial of the pure marks of the church.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn the view that the doctrine of the church should be based not only on biblical statements about it, but also on how human beings perceive the empirical (visible) church to be in the modern situation.
2. We reject and condemn the idea that the marks of the church are other than the pure teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments. For example, the holiness of its members is not a reliable indication of a true visible church, because holiness can be pretended, and because believers, who are justified, continue to be sinful. Nor is the age of a church body an infallible mark of a true visible church. The Jews of Jesus' day represented the old teaching, and Jesus the new teaching, which fulfilled the old. Nor is external unity a dependable mark. Nor is the name of a church body. Confessors of the truth have often been known by uncomplimentary names! Nor is descent by way of ecclesiastical tradition from those who had the truth at some time in the past. Visible church bodies which were once orthodox can become unorthodox. Nor is an unbroken line of bishops installed by bishops back to the apostles a guarantee of the right teaching of the Gospel within a visible church. Nor is association with a place, be it Jerusalem, Rome, the burial-place of Peter and Paul, Constantinople, Wittenberg, Geneva, or any other. Nor is the number of the adherents of a visible church (For this line of thought, see *The Scots Confession*, XVIII). Nor are miraculous events necessarily signs that the Gospel has been truly proclaimed. We reject and condemn the view that prayer is a means of grace or one of the marks of the church (See John Wesley, *Sermon XII*).
3. We reject 'gospel reductionism', that is, limiting the marks of the church to justification by faith, or limiting what is essential and necessary to the Gospel in a narrow sense. When we speak of the right teaching of the Gospel we mean all the articles of faith with justification by faith in Christ at their centre. In the *Augsburg Confession*, Article VII, for example, agreement in the doctrine of the Gospel does not mean only Article IV, but at least Articles I-XXI, as the contrast between 'the pure

teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments' and 'rites and ceremonies instituted by men' clearly indicates.

4. We reject and condemn the notion that the visibility of the hidden church should be sought in people or in organizations rather than in the pure marks of the church. One denomination should never be regarded as co-terminous with the one holy Christian church or a part of it (*Apology* VII-VIII, 10).
5. We reject and condemn the notion that the practice of fellowship should be based on 'marks of unionism' rather than on the objective marks of the church. We reject the notion that where 'the marks of unionism' are absent, fellowship may be practised. For 'marks of unionism' are easily perceived subjectively.
6. We reject and condemn the view that the Law together with the Gospel belongs essentially to the nature of the church or to the marks of the church.
7. Though we affirm the need for discipline in life and the need for right doctrinal practice, we reject and condemn the view that church discipline or a so-called 'right form of polity' should also be regarded as marks of the church alongside of the Word and the Sacraments (See *Belgic Confession* XXIX; *Scots Confession* XVIII).
8. We reject and condemn the view that, because the Lord's Supper contains the Gospel, the Lord's Supper should be used as an instrument of reaching unity in the Gospel and the Sacraments where it does not yet exist. Communion fellowship must be seen as the point toward which dialogue under the Word of God should lead, not a means of bringing it about.
9. We reject and condemn the view that it is the function of civil government to maintain the truth, to protect and promote the profession of the Gospel, call synods, and see that the church follows God's will (See *We stminster Confession* XXIII; *Savoy Declaration* XXIV). We consider that when the church speaks prophetically to the government of the day, this is almost invariably in the negative, when the truth and conscience are under threat. It is not, except where the confession of the truth is really at stake, the task of the church to attempt to bring influence on parliaments in their framing of legislation.
10. We reject and condemn the joint conduct of worship and participation in worship where there is no agreement in the pure marks of the church, and where there is failure to confess the whole truth of the divine Word.
11. We reject and condemn commitment to a world-wide fellowship of Christian churches in the 'ecumenical movement' such as the World Council of Churches as it is at present constituted. Membership in the Lutheran World Federation or the World Council of Churches would call our witness to the Gospel into question, because of the manifest disunity there. We are not enthusiastic or hopeful about the ecumenical movement as it exists at present, because we see so much loss of faith, loss of spiritual direction, so many conflicting voices within and between many of the member denominations, and because there are reinterpretations of the doctrines of historic Christianity that amount to a rejection of them. We reject and condemn the toleration there of various forms of social gospel, involvement in overtly political leftist causes, the toleration of liberation theology, joint worship, and joint mission that does not require doctrinal unity, and the upholding of reconciled diversity in principle. Error is often assigned equal rights with the truth there.

12. We reject and condemn the notion that each and every form of separation from a group that is Christian in name is necessarily a sin on the part of those who separate. If the reason for their separation is the refusal to tolerate persistent false teaching of the Gospel, their action is right. God requires separation from persistent error (Compare Galatians 1:6-9; 2 John 7-11; 1 Corinthians 11:19; 16:22; Romans 16:17-18, in contrast to vv.1-16). When this is necessary it ought also to be done in the name of love, which does not rejoice in iniquity, but in the truth. Division that occurs because of disagreement in the pure doctrine of the Gospel is to be blamed on those who teach or tolerate error.
13. We reject and condemn open communion, and refuse communion to those Lutherans who tolerate and practise it. Those who receive the Lord's Supper should be able to examine themselves and recognize the true presence of the body and blood of the Lord, lest they commune unworthily and to their judgment. Even where there is acceptance of the real presence by members of other churches, this should not be seen in isolation from the broader confession of the pure marks of the church. We do not accept that people may commune both at the altars of churches which uphold the pure marks of the church and at the altars of churches that disagree with the pure marks of the church.
14. We reject and condemn the view that Baptism alone is the basis of church unity. We acknowledge the one Baptism by any Christian church that teaches the Trinity. However, church unity depends on the pure teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Lord's Supper also. The same blessings are, indeed, imparted in the Lord's Supper as in the Gospel and in Baptism. However, though the Gospel is intended to be heard by all people, including unbelievers, and though all those who are brought for Baptism are, with very few exceptions, baptized, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper for disciples.
15. We reject and condemn the communion of infants. Those who commune should be able to examine themselves to discern the Lord's body and blood (1 Corinthians 11:28-29; *Augsburg Confession* XXV,1; *Large Catechism, Preface* , 5; Fifth Part, 2, & 58; *Brief Exhortation to Confession* , 29). According to the Lutheran Confessions the Lord's Supper is distributed to those who have been examined and absolved. Besides, bread and wine are not appropriate food and drink for infants!
16. Though we desire faith in all people, we reject and condemn the view that the practice of fellowship depends on the subjective perception that particular people are in their hearts believers in the Lord Jesus.
17. We reject and condemn the view that partial expression of the pure marks of the church is sufficient. The true contrast to '*the pure teaching of the Gospel and the right administration of the Sacraments*' in *Augsburg Confession* VII is '*rites and ceremonies instituted by men*'.
18. We reject and condemn the concept of 'reconciled diversity', because it assigns error equal rights with truth, and gives up the attempt to determine whether the teaching of the Gospel is pure.
19. We reject the principle of 'levels of fellowship', as if there could be different degrees of cooperation according to the perceived degree of agreement. Communion is one. Either there is agreement on the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and full fellowship, or lack of agreement and refusal of church fellowship until there is agreement.

20. We reject and condemn attempts to speak of 'expressing' unity between all Christians where there is as yet no agreement in the pure marks of the church, in which alone the visibility of the church is rightly sought.
21. We reject and condemn church mergers and the practice of fellowship that precede agreement in the marks of the church.
22. We reject and condemn the policy of selective fellowship with Lutherans from overseas churches that are not in fellowship with us, because such an on-going practice ignores in principle the duty to establish whether the pure marks of the church are in evidence in those churches or not. In addition such a policy tends to lead to subjective assessment of persons and to the avoiding of unpleasantness by accepting all who call themselves Lutheran. Normally a person's non-protesting membership in a church body which does not profess and practise the pure marks of the church must exclude him from our fellowship. If, because of extraordinary or emergency circumstances, the church should advise the practice of fellowship with such an individual, then the grounds for this advice, demonstrating his adherence to the pure marks of the church, must be given publically.

## Article 18

### THE PUBLIC MINISTRY

There are in the ministry today increasing tendencies towards hierarchy. For example, the ecumenical document *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (WCC Faith and Order Paper no. 111) clearly advocates the general adoption of the bishopric as a step towards further organizational unity. As another example, negotiations between Anglicans and Lutherans overseas have been hindered because not all Lutheran leaders are called 'bishops'. In these overseas negotiations, sponsored in part by the Lutheran World Federation, Lutherans have been prevailed upon to revise their terminology so that all who exercise an ordained ministry of 'pastoral leadership, coordination, and oversight' are to be called 'bishops' or 'suffragan bishops'. They are no longer to serve for a specified number of years, but until resignation, retirement, or death. Lutheran bishops are to be installed with a 'laying on of hands by at least three bishops' (with at least one to be Anglican). It is to be unfailing practice for Lutherans that only bishops or suffragan bishops preside at all ordinations of clergy. These agreements have been made in spite of admissions of lack of complete doctrinal unity. Even an Anglican archbishop publicly advocates that the Pope should be recognized as a universal Christian leader.

Such hierarchical tendencies are partly encouraged by a loss among laymen of the understanding of the spiritual priesthood of all believers.

Paradoxically there is in some quarters an opposite tendency to dissipate the ministry by commissioning laymen to carry out the functions of the public ministry instead of calling and ordaining them.

The question of the ordination of women is becoming more and more a test case of basic attitudes towards the authority of Scripture and is likely to be a catalyst for confessional Lutherans in showing where their loyal brothers and sisters are.

## AFFIRMATIVE

1. We believe, teach, and confess that Christ is the only high priest, but that all Christian believers, men, women, and children, are members of the spiritual priesthood of the New Testament. They all have the privilege of direct access to God because of Christ, and the obligations to worship, to praise, to proclaim the Gospel, to teach, to absolve one another in Christ's name, and to encourage one another. All Christians are involved in this service or 'ministry' in the broad sense. The power of the keys has been given to all Christians.
2. We acknowledge that there is no express connection between the priesthood of all believers and the office of the public ministry in any passage of the New Testament. The relationship between them is the obvious one that the public ministry exists within the church, serves the universal priesthood, and needs its support.
3. We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic office of Jesus Christ and the office of apostle in the New Testament are basic to the on-going ministry of the New Testament, but some of the functions of the apostles, like being witnesses of the Lord's resurrection, and writing God's message by inspiration, were unique, and not transferable to successors. There is no power of self-perpetuation in a regular succession from men ordained by apostles. Nor is the genuine apostolic tradition necessarily guaranteed by such an 'apostolic succession'. The strong stress on succession from the apostles and the use of succession-lists by writers like Irenaeus and Tertullian (alongside the rule of faith and written and oral apostolic tradition) are best considered an over-reaction, and a mistaken means of safeguarding orthodoxy against heresies such as Gnosticism, which claimed special secret apostolic tradition. A valid ministry does not depend on apostolic succession. Nor is the unity of the church to be located either in the succession of clergy or in the clergy themselves (Compare Cyprian, *De unitate catholicae ecclesiae*, and *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry*, par. 38).
4. We believe, teach, and confess that all the spiritual functions of the apostles that are necessary for the church of all times are continued only in the proclamation of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. The functions of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments are basic to the understanding of the Lutheran doctrine of the ministry. Christ has won salvation for all people by his life, death, and resurrection, and he imparts the benefits of his redemptive work through the preaching and teaching of the Gospel and the administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. It is God's will that people come to faith and be sustained in faith through the Gospel and the Sacraments as through instruments. Through the means of grace the Holy Spirit works and fosters faith where and when it pleases God in those who hear and receive.
5. We believe, teach, and confess that local congregations are divine institutions, and it is God's will that particular persons should be designated to proclaim the Gospel publicly and administer the Sacraments in the name of congregations. Through these particular persons Christ continues his prophetic office (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11). It is not left to the whim of congregations whether they will have ministers or not. It is also both God's will and a matter of good order that those who regularly preach or teach in the church should be regularly called to these functions (*Augsburg Confession*, Article XIV).
6. We believe, teach, and confess, on the one hand, that the minister is the servant of the congregation or authorized body of the church that has called him, in the sense that he serves them publicly with the means of grace (2 Corinthians 4:5). The people who

have called him in Christ's name have the right to expect that he will be faithful to the Gospel. On the other hand, insofar as he speaks the Gospel faithfully, he is pre-eminently the servant of the Lord. The people should hear him as they hear the Lord. The minister may, if need be, have to stand against a majority of his congregation on a particular issue in faithfulness to his Lord (1 Corinthians 4:1-5). The called minister has, however, no arbitrary power over Christians. His authority is only the authority of the Scriptures. His essential function is the correct proclamation of the Gospel and the correct administration of the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. These functions alone are the signs of the presence of the one church of all times and places, not the men who hold office as such, nor, for that matter, is any particular human arrangement or polity a mark of the presence of the one church.

7. We believe, teach, and confess that a regular call is necessary for a person to qualify him to preach the Gospel publicly and administer the Sacraments in the church. An 'inner call' or outstanding charismatic gift is not enough to authorize any person to function as a public minister of the Gospel in the name of the church. A vote by a congregation or group of congregations is the usual means of issuing a call. The use of a word meaning 'elect by show of hands' in Acts 14:23 probably indicates such a vote. However, an appointment by an authorized church official would also be enough if that were the present arrangement. Titus 1:5 may indicate such an arrangement. All those who exercise the public ministry of the Gospel and the Sacraments, even in an unpaid or part-time or a limited specialist form, should be regularly called. It is God who appoints pastors through whatever variable human arrangement is used (Acts 20:28). The prior reception of a call is important for both ordination and installation or commissioning.
8. We believe, teach, and confess that most of the qualifications for the ministry mentioned in the Scriptures are ethical, and might have been expected of any Christian layman, with the special exception of 'able to teach' (1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:2).
9. We acknowledge that in the New Testament there is some variety in the organization of the ministry in particular situations. It is, however, clear that the positions of bishop and presbyter (elder) in the New Testament were interchangeable (Acts 20:17, compared with v. 28; Titus 1:5, compared with v. 7; Philippians 1:1; 1 Peter 5:2; compare 1 Clement, and the *Didache*). It was subsequent development after the apostolic age that led to a three-tiered ministry consisting of a bishop, presbyters, and deacons (compare the letters of Ignatius). Eventually bishops were restricted to one in any one city, and the functions of the other presbyters were limited. Deacons were then chiefly the assistants of the bishop; but there is no evidence of the diaconate as a probationary order for the presbyterate before Cornelius of Rome (251-253 A.D.). Clearly there could be more than one presbyter-bishop in any locality in the New Testament (Acts 20:17-28). If there is a present distinction between names like 'bishop' and 'pastor', that is in itself an arbitrary distinction. All ministers have in principle the same oversight and authority: the Gospel and the Sacraments. There is in theory no essential difference of function unless the calling body has specified a limited or specialist way of working with the Gospel or the Sacraments for a particular minister.
10. We acknowledge that the formulators of the *Augsburg Confession* were prepared to accept the ecclesiastical authority of bishops as of human right alone, provided they did not suppress the Gospel (*Augsburg Confession*, Article XXVIII). However, we also observe that the term 'bishop' has over the centuries continued to be loaded with hierarchical associations that are distinctly misleading and harmful.

11. We believe, teach, and confess that ordination is not a divine institution or a Sacrament. It is a very useful rite, in which a qualified person, who has previously accepted a call from a congregation or several congregations, or a synodical committee that has been authorized to issue a call, has his call publically acknowledged. The laying-on of hands is usual, but not essential. Strictly, what makes a minister is not the rite of ordination as such, but the call of God through the human arrangement of issuing a call. Particular persons are set apart for the ministry in this way. It is appropriate that in the ordination the call should be publicly acknowledged, that the candidate should publicly promise loyalty to the Scriptures and the creeds and confessions of the church, and faithfulness to the Lord and his flock. It is appropriate that the people should at an ordination receive their pastor as a gift from the Lord, pray for him, and promise to support and encourage him in his work. Ordination does not confer any indelible character. A person who has left the ministry to take up another vocation has no right to insist on being called 'pastor' any more. In an emergency a congregation could itself ordain, without visiting clergy. For example, in Alexandria in the early church there were no visiting bishops present at the ordination of a bishop until well into the third century. However, for the sake of good order, it is appropriate that ordinations should be arranged by the president, or a district president, of the church, though they need not always be performed by them. Ordination also attests to other congregations of the church that the pastor is eligible for the ministry and for calls by other congregations.
12. We believe, teach, and confess that ordination does not differ essentially from installation, except that ordination is usually for life, and is not repeated. It is not necessary to consider ministers of the Gospel bound by canon 15 of Nicaea, 325 A.D., which limited clergy to a specific place for life. When a pastor accepts a call to another congregation or parish he is not deciding the divinity or otherwise of the respective calls, but what God's will is for his future service in the ministry under either of the divine calls. It is appropriate that an installation or commissioning be conducted at the beginning of each successive ministry, that prayer be offered for the new pastor, and that there should be promises of mutual faithfulness, support, and encouragement. The divine call, not the fact of ordination or installation, provides reassurance in times of doubt or weariness.
13. We accept that ordination does not give a minister the right to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments in any congregation other than the ones to which he has been called, unless there has been a regular invitation to do so from the congregation.
14. We accept that it is good order that the president of the church and the presidents of the districts of the church should be asked to exercise a general oversight of the ministry, and that the constitution of the church should provide procedures to follow if a pastor is charged with false doctrine, an ungodly life, or neglect of his duties.
15. We believe, teach, and confess that the public ministry of the Gospel and the Sacraments is the only office that Christ has instituted for his church. This office may be limited or specialized as circumstances require. In addition, congregations have the right to appoint particular auxiliary offices. However, there is a distinction between those offices that the church has organized to meet special needs and the public office of the ministry that Christ has instituted. It is, therefore, appropriate that auxiliary offices like those of teacher and parish-worker be filled by installation or commissioning. Those who labour regularly in the public ministry of the Gospel and the Sacraments should be regularly called and ordained, and not called 'laymen'.
16. We accept that the auxiliary office called 'elder' in many congregations has no relation to the way 'elder' is used in the New Testament. These 'elders' are not ordained or



regarded as members of the public ministry, and might more appropriately be designated by some other name, such as 'deacons'. It is appropriate that specifically designated laymen ('elders' or others) assist in the distribution of the Lord's Supper, but they should not consecrate it.

17. We believe, teach, and confess that ordination is closed to women. Though Christian women are members of the universal priesthood of all believers, and though being males or females makes no difference to the relationships of believers to Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28), women are prohibited from being called to the office of the public ministry (1 Corinthians 14:33-37; 1 Timothy 2:11-14). These passages express God's specific command for good order for the churches of all times. Liberty under the Gospel cannot extend to disobedience to specific commands of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:37).

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn the view that there were some powers or rights vested in the apostles or their successors exclusively. There were also no powers or rights that only they could confer on others.
2. We reject and condemn the view that confirmation and ordination are essentially the prerogative of a bishop alone.
3. We reject and condemn present attempts to seek prestige, status, and influence by introducing the title 'bishop' for general president and district presidents.
4. We reject and condemn the view that 'president' is not an appropriate term for a church leader because it is allegedly secular. Many examples of the ecclesiastical use of the word 'president' for a church leader can be found in writers in the early church, and the expression 'preside at the Eucharist' is still current.
5. However, we dissent from the view that New Testament usage of the word 'bishop' or the history of the word 'president' should alone determine their usage in the present context. False developments have led to a situation where there is a highly unsatisfactory connotation of hierarchy, status, prestige, influence, and reserved functions (such as ordination and confirmation) in the word 'bishop'. Even if it were desired to take up the term 'bishop' for every pastor, these present hierarchical associations would still be unfortunate.
6. We reject and condemn any notion of 'indelibility' for the ordination of bishops, that is, that once a person becomes a leader of a church he remains so until death, resignation, or retirement.
7. We reject and condemn the view that people who function regularly in the public proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the Sacrament may continue to be regarded as 'laymen'.
8. We reject and condemn the present practice for women to read lessons in services of public worship. We reject and condemn the notion that the crucial issue in deciding whether women may have speaking roles in public services, such as reading lessons or distributing the Lord's Supper, is the authority of the pastor alone. The point of the pertinent Scripture passages (1 Corinthians 14:33-37; 1 Timothy 2:11-14) is the submission of the women over against the men, which includes the principle of the headship of men over women (1 Corinthians 11:3-5; Ephesians 5:23).

9. Since distribution of the Lord's Supper involves speaking in a leading role in the public service (1 Corinthians 14:33-37; 1 Timothy 2:11-14), we reject and condemn the conclusion that women may assist in the distribution of the Lord's Supper.
10. We reject and condemn the view that 1 Corinthians 14:33-37 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 may be regarded as merely expressing the prevailing culture of the time of St. Paul (cf. *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* par. 54), or that these passages do not apply today because they were allegedly addressed only to particular extreme situations in congregations of that time. (1 Corinthians 14:33 is quite general: 'in all the churches of the saints'. In the section before 1 Timothy 2:11-14 there is a series of general words like 'all', 'everywhere', and 'everyone', 1 Timothy 2:1-2, 6, 8).
11. We reject and condemn the view that an inner call to a woman to be a minister is a proper basis for the ordination of women.
12. We reject and condemn the view that present trends towards the ordination of women are part of the Holy Spirit's leading the church into all truth, and that the church today is allegedly drawing out implications in the gospel message. The Holy Spirit does not lead the church into a direct contradiction of a commandment of the Lord in Scripture inspired by himself. One who accepts Jesus as his Saviour is also under obligation to obey his word, and that of his apostles. St. Paul appeals to the fact that Adam was created first, and the fact that Eve was deceived first, as reasons for this church practice (1 Timothy 2:13-14).
13. We reject and condemn the view that the mention of prophetesses in the New Testament and the association of some house churches in the New Testament with women (Acts 16:15; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 John 13) are valid grounds for the ordination of women. Prophetesses and other women would have been bound to follow the command of the Lord to be silent in the churches. Their roles must have been restricted to situations outside of public worship (e.g., Acts 18:26). The fact that Paul says that a woman who prophesies with her head unveiled dishonours her head (1 Corinthians 11:5) cannot be taken as the ground for saying that women could prophesy in public worship services if their heads were covered, for this would contradict 1 Corinthians 14:33-37. 'Speaking' is a more general term than 'prophesying'. Besides, what is discussed in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is broader than the context of public worship. In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 St. Paul is concerned with prophesying only in so far as it is a sign of authority or headship, and his direct concern there is the question of the head covering. In 1 Corinthians 14:33-37 he is concerned about speaking in a leading position in the public worship service, not if, but because, that is contrary to the submissive role that women ought to have in public worship (v. 34).
14. We reject and condemn the view that because the head- covering is a custom that has changed, passages like 1 Corinthians 14:33-37 do not apply any more either. In 1 Corinthians 11:16 Paul specifically uses a word meaning 'practice' or 'custom' of the head-covering, even though he had used scriptural argumentation to support the custom at that time. For an uncovered head was regarded as equivalent to a shaven head, with implications of loose morality (1 Corinthians 11:5-6). However, with respect to the prohibition of women's speaking in the churches Paul speaks, not of a custom, but of a 'commandment of the Lord' (1 Corinthians 14:37).
15. We reject and condemn the view that ordination to the ministry may be based on the ability of women to perform the functions of the ministry. It is not a question of ability, but of the Lord's command (1 Corinthians 14:37). The Scripture passages are

absolutely clear. If 1 Corinthians 14:33-37 and 1 Timothy 2:11-14 do not exclude the ordination of women, they do not exclude anything. If they do not apply today, why should they ever have applied when Paul wrote them?

## Article 19

### THE LORD'S SUPPER

In the present context the pressure on Lutherans to give up a clear confession of the real presence has continued. *External* pressure led some Lutherans in Prussia and Saxony to leave their homeland in 1838 and following years and go to America and Australia to preserve their faith for themselves and their children, and to avoid the King of Prussia's attempt to force a union with the Reformed. Today *internal* pressure has led many Lutheran churches to compromise the clear teaching of the real presence that is confessed in the Lutheran Confessions. In Germany the union churches have grown like a cancer. What Hitler failed to force on the Lutheran state churches of Germany during the Second World War they subsequently accepted of their own accord. The state Lutheran churches in Germany have altar fellowship with the Reformed and the union churches. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America also has established altar fellowship with some Reformed churches, and allows its members to attend communion in non-Lutheran churches, with some minor restrictions. Swedish Lutherans have altar- communion with Anglicans, and Danish Lutherans have communion with the Presbyterian Church in Scotland.

There is an increasing tendency among some pastors of the Lutheran Church of Australia to give up the practice of close communion.

There are strong pressures to engage in joint celebrations of the Lord's Supper in spite of lack of full doctrinal agreement, as a so-called 'expression of oneness in the faith'. In various minimal agreements Lutherans have accepted compromise formulations like: 'Jesus gives us himself', and 'Believers feed on Christ' in the Lord's Supper (e.g. the Lutheran- Reformed *Leuenberg Concord* ; and the World Council of Churches' statement, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* ). These can be understood merely in the sense of spiritual eating, which can occur also outside the Sacrament.

There has been some debate in Lutheran circles overseas over the time when the real presence begins.

There is increasing advocacy of the communion of infants without realising false developments in infant communion in the early church.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe, teach, and confess that Jesus Christ instituted the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-25) during his celebration of the Passover. It is a Sacrament, which sums up in a special way the whole Gospel of redemption through Jesus Christ.
2. We believe, teach, and confess that there is a close connection between the incarnation of the Son of God and the Lord's Supper. In it he gives us his true, human, but also life-giving, body and blood (Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-30). The body and blood of Christ are really present in the Lord's Supper in the bread and wine. There Christ is present in more than merely a general way (Matthew 18:20, for example, speaks of Christ's presence where two or three are gathered together in his name). So as the bread and the wine are distributed, taken, eaten and drunk, the body and the blood of Christ are taken, eaten, and drunk. This eating and drinking is

an eating and drinking with the mouth, and it is an eating and drinking which is true of all who partake, whether they are worthy (believing) or unworthy (unbelieving) guests. We acknowledge that the real presence is a mystery, and we do not try to define it. We are content to make the simple assertion of the real presence on the basis of the Lord's words when he instituted the Supper. What we say more than this simple assertion is merely an attempt to ward off denials of right teaching. In Jesus' words, 'This is my body', 'This' refers to the bread that he had just taken. There is no hint of a dream, parable or anything figurative in the accounts in Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23; and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Therefore the idea that the bread and wine merely represent Jesus' body and blood is impossible. The complement is different from the subject. There is a synecdoche, in which a part (bread and wine) is used to denote the whole, bread and Christ's body, wine and Christ's blood. 1 Corinthians 10:16 (*KJV* or *NKJV*) makes the truth clear that these are in communion. Still more, Jesus' powerful and creative words bring about the presence of his body and his blood with the bread and the wine.

3. We acknowledge that we cannot define the precise moment when the real presence begins. However, we believe, teach, and confess that, after the celebrant has 'blessed' (or, consecrated) there already is a communion between the elements and Christ's body and blood (1 Corinthians 10:16, *KJV* or *NKJV*). In verse 16 'we' is the subject of 'bless' and 'break'. The 'communion' or togetherness is between the wine and Christ's blood, and between the bread and his body, and this communion is there before any participating by communicants (1 Corinthians 10:17). The words of Christ which the celebrant uses within the liturgy are the powerful and effective words of Christ himself, which bring about the real presence, just as at that passover when our Lord first instituted this Supper with his disciples. It should be understood that we do not here speak of consecration apart from the proper use of the Sacrament, which is eating and drinking.
4. We believe, teach, and confess that through his body and blood Jesus gives us the forgiveness of sins that he has won for all people through his incarnate active obedience for us and his unique sacrifice for us at Calvary once for all. Because Jesus' flesh is that of the Son of man who came down from heaven, his human flesh and blood can do what human flesh and blood elsewhere cannot do. They are life-giving. Indeed, 'where there is forgiveness of sins there is also life and salvation'.
5. We believe, teach, and confess that when the Lord's Supper is properly celebrated there is an element of mystery, a personal remembering by the believing communicants of their Lord himself and his death; a yearning for his second coming, an unspoken proclamation by communicants of the Lord's death and of their involvement in it, an element of thanksgiving, and a corporate dimension. We who commune together are one body with those with whom we commune (1 Corinthians 10:17).
6. We believe, teach, and confess that the proper use of the Lord's Supper is the believing reception of what the Lord gives. While all who commune receive the body and blood of the Lord, only those who receive the gift in faith receive the forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation. Those who receive it without faith receive it to their judgment. In this respect the Sacrament is just like the Gospel, which also judges when it is rejected. For the Gospel also is a fragrance to some from life to life, while to others it is a fragrance from death to death (2 Corinthians 1:15-16).

7. We believe, teach, and confess that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper is one of the visible marks of the one holy Christian church, which is otherwise hidden. This is so because it is through the Sacrament that Christ comes to us according to his promise (1 Corinthians 10:17).
8. We believe, teach, and confess the need to practise close communion. This was the practice of the church from its earliest times. Those who partake of the Lord's Supper should be baptized, should be able to discern the presence of the Lord's body and blood, should hold the marks of the church purely, should live a life that is in keeping with their Christian profession, and should be reconciled with those with whom they commune. The sharing of the one bread and the one cup of the Lord's Supper is a glorious demonstration of unity in the one body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:17). The Lord's Supper should not be offered by Lutherans to members of churches with which there is no agreement in the Gospel and in the Sacraments (Romans 16:17: compare 16:1-16; 1 Corinthians 16:20-23; Galatians 1:6-9). Truthful confession also requires that Lutherans should refuse to receive the Lord's Supper at the altars of churches with which there is no agreement in the pure marks of the church.
9. Old Testament believers shared in certain sacrifices and their blessings by eating part of the sacrificial victims. Similarly, we believe that New Testament communicants share in the completed sacrifice of Christ and its blessings when they partake of it.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn formulations on the Lord's Supper that leave open the interpretation that Christ's body and blood are received with the heart only, and fail to insist that Christ's body and blood are received with the mouth, by all communicants.
2. We reject and condemn formulations on the Lord's Supper that speak as though Christ's body were present only locally in heaven, and fail to insist that his body and blood are present at the altar in the Sacrament here on earth.
3. We reject and condemn the doctrine that the bread and the wine are changed into the substance of the body and blood of Christ ('transubstantiation'). The use of the words 'change of reality' is also to be rejected, because of their ambiguity. In fact bread and wine remain, and their reality is not changed. They are in communion with Christ's body and blood (1 Corinthians 10:16).
4. We reject and condemn the assertion 'nothing of bread and wine remains, only the appearance' (Paul VI's *Mysterium Fidei*).
5. We reject and condemn attempts to reintroduce language of change, because the New Testament nowhere uses the language of change in connection with the Lord's Supper. These attempts are unnecessary and confusing. What the *Apology* says in X, 2 is said because its concern was to point out that the Greek and Latin churches had all along accepted the real presence. The point of the reference (cf. *Formula of Concord, S.D. VII, 11* and *VII, 76*) is not to approve the language of change. In normal usage 'change' implies that what was previously there is no longer there; but the Scriptures still clearly refer to bread and wine in the Sacrament (1 Corinthians 10:17; 11:28). Moreover, the history of the Sacrament shows that each attempt to explain the mystery by formulations involving 'change' have led to more and more attempts to explain it, such as the Aristotelian distinction between substance and accidents, fruitless discussion about whether the subject of the so-called remaining accidents was the accident of quantity or that of quality, or both, and attempts to define the precise moment of change (Thomas Aquinas, for example, said in the *Summa*

*theologiae* that the 'changes' occurred at the last syllables respectively of the words 'This is my body' and 'This is my blood'). The formulation, 'The reality has changed after the consecration' ( *Sacrament and Sacrifice* par. 28; par. 31) is ambiguous because it also suggests that the bread and the wine are no longer present.

6. We reject and condemn the idea of a local inclusion of the heavenly gift in the earthly elements and a continuing union of the earthly elements and the heavenly gift beyond the time of the celebration ('consubstantiation').
7. We reject and condemn any suggestion that the body and blood of the Lord are received into the body like any earthly substance, or as though the body and blood of the Lord were received in a way perceptible to reason and the senses of touch, taste, and sight ('Capernaitic' eating and drinking, John 6:52-71).
8. We reject and condemn all attempts to explain the words of institution figuratively or symbolically, as though the Lord's Supper were merely a joyful meal of bread and wine to remember Jesus.
9. We reject and condemn the notion that the blessings of the Sacrament come as a result of the faith of the recipient rather than as the consequence of the real presence of Jesus' body and blood.
10. We reject and condemn the opinion that in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 'body' means the mystical body of Christ, the church, as though an unworthy communicant had merely sinned against the church. We are indeed the body of Christ, but we do not receive ourselves (Augustine, *The City of God* , X, 5-6), still less receive ourselves in a propitiatory sense, or save ourselves as the body of Christ. The word 'one' with the word 'body' does indicate that the church is in view in 1 Corinthians 10:17. However, in 1 Corinthians 10:16 and 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 the body of Christ is his own historical body, which saves us, and which is present in the Sacrament, because of the association with the word 'blood'. 'One' is not used with 'body' in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34. Nowhere does Paul say that we, the members of the church, are Christ's blood as well as his body. When his 'blood' is mentioned with his 'body', 'body' means his historical body, which was given for us, and which is present in the Sacrament of the Altar.
11. We reject and condemn attempts to reintroduce the language of sacrifice into the Lord's Supper (Compare the World Council of Churches' statement, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* ). People in the early church who had come out of Judaism or paganism found it difficult to imagine worship of God without the language of sacrifice. As long as aspects of praise and thanksgiving in the Lord's Supper were thought of as spiritual sacrifices, there was no difficulty. As long as offerings of bread and wine in the offertory to be used in the Lord's Supper and to feed the poor were thought of as joyous sacrifices or offerings, there was also no difficulty. However, the notion of priest and people's offering Christ and the thought that the sacrifice of priest and people was propitiatory were serious false developments. The Lord's Supper is not an offering of the church to God by which it gains merit for the church or for those who commune. We reject the notion that a priest offers the body of the Lord on the altar daily for daily offences ( *Apology* XXIV, 62) or for the sins of the living (even without their communing) or for particular purposes, and for the dead. For the death of Christ is the only real propitiatory sacrifice ( *Apology* XXIV, 23 and 56). These false developments obscured Christ's unique propitiatory sacrifice for sin (Romans 6:10; Hebrews 7:27; 9:12, 28; 1 Peter 3:18). The New Testament had not used the idea of sacrifice in the context of the Lord's Supper at all, except by way of

contrast in 1 Corinthians 10:18-21. The terms 'sacrifice' and 'offer' were inherently ambiguous and had obscured the Gospel, and that is why all use of 'sacrifice' was removed by the Reformers from the liturgy (*Augsburg Confession* XXIV,30; *Apology* XXIV,14; XXIV,19). 'Consecrate' does not mean 'sacrifice'. It is confusing to say that the sacrificial death of Christ becomes a present reality in the Lord's Supper. The fact that we remember Christ in the Sacrament does not make his sacrifice present. What is present is his body and blood, which were sacrificed for us once, and their benefits. The really present body and blood of Christ are what remind us of Christ's death. It is better to say that Christ presents us to God than that we present Christ to God. The history of the concept of sacrifice in connection with the Lord's Supper indicates that it too easily becomes synergistic or propitiatory. In normal language 'sacrifice' often means 'give up something'. What we do is in no way a supplement to the sacrifice of Christ on the cross once and for all. We reject as ambiguous the statement that in the Lord's Supper Christians' sacrifice of themselves is taken up into the one sacrifice of Christ. The world readily imagines that services and sacrifices are propitiations (*Apology* XXIV, 97). To bring any human action apart from the reception of the gift into the Lord's Supper as an essential part of it is like introducing good works or new life as part of God's act of justification.

12. We reject and condemn the view that because the Lord's Supper contains the Gospel, and because the one loaf makes the many who partake of it one in the mystical body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:17), the Lord's Supper should be used as an instrument of reaching unity in the Gospel and the Sacraments where it does not yet exist. The Lord's Supper is indeed a Sacrament of unity. However, it is not the purpose of the Lord's Supper to achieve the pure teaching of the Gospel where it does not exist, but to benefit from, and express unity where it does exist.
13. We reject and condemn the view that the practice of close communion should be dropped because the gospel-filled Lord's Supper makes people worthy and creates faith in them. The same blessings are, indeed, imparted in the Lord's Supper as in the Gospel and in Baptism. However, there is a difference between the Gospel and the Lord's Supper. The Gospel is intended for all, including unbelievers, the unbaptized, and heathen, to hear, without discrimination. Jesus, however, instituted his Supper for those who were already disciples.
14. We reject and condemn the view that the practice of close communion should be dropped because the Lord's Supper depends on Christ's words, not on individual people's lack of faith or their wrong understanding. Paul instructs communicants to examine themselves before they eat and drink, in order that they may recognize that the body and blood of the Lord are present, and he warns them against eating and drinking judgment to themselves, which they would do without faith (1 Corinthians 11:27-32).
15. We reject and condemn open communion, and refuse communion to those Lutherans who tolerate and practise it. Those who receive the Lord's Supper should be able to examine themselves and recognize the true presence of the body and blood of the Lord, lest they commune unworthily and to their judgment. Even where there is acceptance of the real presence by members of other churches, this should not be seen in isolation from the broader confession of the pure marks of the church. We do not accept that people may commune both at the altars of churches which uphold the pure marks of the church and at the altars of churches that disagree with the pure marks of the church.

16. We reject and condemn the communion of infants. Those who commune should be able to examine themselves to discern the Lord's body and blood (1 Corinthians 11:28-29; *Augsburg Confession* XXV,1; *Large Catechism, Preface*, 5; *Fifth Part*, 2, & 58; *Brief Exhortation to Confession*, 29). According to the Lutheran Confessions the Lord's Supper is distributed to those who have been examined and absolved. Besides, bread and wine are not appropriate food and drink for infants.

## Article 20

### CREATION

It has always been the belief of the true church of God throughout history that this world with all its creatures is the creation of God, who made all things out of nothing in six days, as the Scripture so clearly states. So obvious and so general was this belief among Christians, that, until last century, it was not in dispute even among theologians of different church bodies, and was not therefore specifically set out in the confessional writings of the Lutheran Church. In the last century, however, since the Darwinian theory of evolution began to be generally accepted in scientific circles, many, also in the churches, began to question whether the doctrine of creation is a necessary part of the Christian confession to the world. In the face of the claim that evolution is a scientifically proven fact, and that no thinking person can now question that this universe came about by a long process of evolution, over multi-millions of years, many theologians felt that it was no longer possible to teach the biblical doctrine of creation in six ordinary days, without losing all academic respectability. They were concerned that, as in the days of Galileo, the church could be made to look foolish by the so-called 'assured results of modern science', which had 'proved' beyond all doubt that this world and all life on it came into being by a long process of evolution. To save the church from such embarrassment, many sought for some compromise between the biblical teaching of creation in six days and the theory of evolutionary development. A number of such compromises were tried, all of which we believe to be contrary to the clear teaching of God's Word.

#### The Gap Theory

Some proposed the so-called 'gap-theory', which postulates that an original world, having come about by a long process of evolution, was later destroyed, so that it was 'without form and void' (Genesis 1:2), and that God then set about to re-construct the world in the manner described in Genesis 1:3-31. In this way room was made in Genesis 1 for some kind of evolutionary theories, and for the supposed vast ages of rocks and cosmic bodies. This is mere speculation and has no support in the Scriptures.

#### Theistic Evolution

Others simply accepted the evolutionary assumptions of atheistic scientists, and claimed that God initiated and used this process to bring the universe and its creatures into being. They suggested that the six days of Genesis 1 were really six vast periods of millions of years each. In this way the biblical account of creation was made to fit in with the theory of evolution by providing sufficient time for evolution to occur. Such theologians generally claim that the order and manner of creation, as taught in the first chapter of God's Word, is not important for our salvation, and therefore the church should not 'dogmatize' about such things, so long as it believes and teaches that God in fact made all things out of nothing. Some, nevertheless, insist that we must also hold to the special creation of man and woman as separate from the animals, even though popular evolutionary theory would insist that man evolved from ape-



like ancestors. Others see this as inconsistent, and insist that the church too should recognize and concede that man is really nothing but an evolutionary development from lower forms of animal life. They are prepared either to 'interpret' all passages of Scripture from such an evolutionary point of view, or to concede that the writers of Scripture, because of their lack of scientific understanding, were simply wrong, and that the church is not bound in its belief by the views of such 'primitive' authors, because the Bible is not a 'textbook of science'.

### Progressive Evolution

Still others have suggested that God created the universe in a series of creative acts, separated by vast periods of time. While the actual creation days may have been ordinary days, yet these were interspersed with long periods of development through purely natural processes. They generally accept the historicity of Adam and Eve and their special creation by God, but they would not accept that creation occurred in a week of six days. Their view is that from start to finish creation would have taken a vast period of millions of years. In this respect they compromise with the popular theory of evolution.

### Response

In opposition to these views, Christian theologians, including Luther, have insisted that all our religious teaching and beliefs, also concerning the creation, must be taken from the Word of God alone (Revelation 22:18-19). God was the only one present at the creation of all things. We dare not interpret his Word according to the evolutionary presuppositions of men, or try to 'harmonize' Scripture with the popular theories of our time. Those who would confess the truth of God to the unbelieving world, have no right to try to shield themselves from the embarrassment that such a true confession would evoke from the academic world. The Word and truth of God is bound to be an offence before the unbelieving world, and we must be ready to accept that without trying to save face.

Faithful Christians insist that the plain and clear teaching of God's Word is that God himself created all things out of nothing by his almighty Word and power, in six ordinary days of one evening and one morning each, and that he did this in the manner and in the order so clearly set out in the historical account of Genesis 1.

They insist, furthermore, that this scriptural doctrine of creation is not some obscure doctrine that can be drawn only with great difficulty from a few isolated passages of Scripture, but it is clearly and explicitly taught in numerous passages of God's Word, and is obviously taken for granted throughout Scripture from beginning to end. They see the doctrine of creation, therefore, not as some unimportant adjunct to the Christian faith, but as a foundational basis for the entire Christian faith. It determines not only man's relationship to his fellow creatures, but to God himself, and so is the basis of all true morality. It is also basic to the Gospel itself or the work of redemption, which is ultimately the restoration of that original perfection of God's creation, lost through the fall into sin, and restored through the work of Christ (cf. Romans 8:18-23). That this has always been the understanding of the true church of God, is evidenced both by the fact that God himself places the origin of man and the universe at the very beginning of his revelation to his church, and by the fact that the confessors of the church in all ages have similarly placed the doctrine of creation first, even before the redemption, in all the ecumenical creeds. This does not mean that creation has pre-eminence over redemption, but that it is presupposed by redemption and foundational to it.

Accordingly, Christian theologians see every denial of the scriptural doctrine of creation as an attack upon true morality, and as the undermining of the Gospel of Christ.

Despite numerous efforts to point out the great theological importance of this doctrine of Scripture, also showing that many scientists in recent years have themselves come to acknowledge that there is absolutely no evidence for the popular theory of evolution, and never has been any, and despite repeated demonstrations that the theory of evolution is nothing but the unscientific creed of atheists, who must give some explanation for the origin of all things without a God, yet there are still many so-called Christians who are apparently determined to accommodate their religious beliefs to the theory of evolution. They insist that the academic credibility of the church, in a world still given to the popular theory of evolution, is too important to return to a simple confession of the biblical doctrine of creation in six days.

We for our part are determined to teach and confess what we believe to be the clear truth of God's Word in this matter, and the historic Christian faith of the true church of God in all ages, and categorically to reject all the errors and false arguments that are opposed to this scriptural doctrine of creation.

### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. Accordingly we believe, teach, and confess that it was the triune God who, in the beginning, created heaven and earth and all things. Although the work of creation is commonly ascribed to the Father, yet the Son and the Holy Spirit were also active in creation (Genesis 1:1-2; Job 26:13; Psalm 33:6; John 1:3; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 2:10).
2. We believe, teach, and confess that the heavens and the earth were created out of nothing, so that before the creation there was not anything but God only. St. Paul speaks of God who 'calls into existence the things that do not exist' (Romans 4:17 *R.S.V.*), and the letter to the Hebrews says, 'Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear' (Hebrews 11:3).
3. We confidently teach and confess that all things were created by the almighty, creative Word of God in six ordinary days of one evening and one morning each, as is so clearly and repeatedly taught in Genesis 1. These six days, according to Scripture, were six successive days, so that together they made up the creation week followed by the day of rest (cf. Exodus 20:11).
4. We furthermore teach and affirm with Scripture that all things were created in the manner and in the order recorded by the inspired writer of Genesis 1. This work of creation began with the creation of heaven and earth and light on the first day, through to the creation of the land animals and man on the sixth day.
5. We affirm with Scripture and the church of all ages that the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, were special creations, separate from the creation of the animals, distinct in being made in the image of God, and distinct from each other in that Adam was created first from the dust of the ground, while Eve was created from man's flesh and bone, as described in Genesis 2. This order of creation is important because by it God determined man's headship and woman's submission to man (cf. 1 Timothy 2:11-15). Both Adam and Eve were historic persons, from whom alone the whole human race descended (cf. Genesis 3:20; Acts 17:26; Romans 5:12-21; etc.).
6. We believe from the record of Scripture, which we hold to be the truth of God, that the time when this creation occurred was not untold millions of years ago, but much more recently, probably less than 10,000 years ago. While we may not be able to calculate the exact date of creation as some have attempted, it is obvious from the

scriptural record that this great event occurred in the order of some thousands, rather than many millions of years ago. While there are possibly some gaps in the lists of names and the genealogical records of Scripture, these gaps must not be exaggerated in the interests of evolutionary presuppositions, or extended to change the obvious meaning of the passages concerned.

7. We hold with Luther that the Genesis account of creation is an historical account and not to be interpreted as myth, legend, or allegory. While some figures of speech, such as similes or metaphors, may occur, as they do in all language, yet the account of creation is clearly intended to be a literal account and must be so understood. Luther rightly asserts concerning these chapters of Genesis, '*Moses spoke in the literal sense, not allegorically or figuratively, i.e., that the world with all its creatures was created within six days, as the words read. If we do not comprehend the reason for this, let us remain pupils and leave the job of teacher to the Holy Spirit*' ( *Luther's Works* , American Ed., vol. 1, p. 5).
8. We believe, according to the Scriptures, that originally everything created by God was very good (Genesis 1:31). This implies that, at least for human beings, there was no corruption, sickness, or death. These evils came into the world through sin, and it was the sin and death of the first Adam that made necessary the atoning death of Christ, the last Adam (Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We therefore are in conscience bound to reject and condemn as serious error, opposed to God's truth, every attempt to interpret these chapters of God's Word as myth, legend, or allegory, or to hold that the people or material spoken of there, may be taken as mythical or non-literal, or impersonal beings, or unreal objects. Thus we reject as foolish and non-scriptural the notion that Adam was not an individual person, but rather the generic term for the human race. Similarly, we reject as contrary to Scripture, the notion that the creation of Eve from Adam's side is a myth, and that the fall of man into sin, as recorded in Genesis 3, may be a myth or allegory, so that no real garden, tree with its fruit, or serpent, may have been involved at all, but that this could simply be a myth, relating to some spiritual truth that could be just as well described by some quite different imagery.
2. We reject the false assertion that the Genesis account of creation is concerned, not with origins, but with relationships, as has been taught among us. Not only is man's relationship to God and the rest of creation largely dependent upon his, and their origin from a common Creator, but the very title 'Genesis' points unmistakably and specifically to the origin of all things rather than to relationships. The Genesis account clearly sets out to inform us about the origin of many things: the universe, the world, life, mankind, woman, marriage, the family, sin, death, the Saviour from sin, and God's people, etc. Without teaching origins, Genesis could not possibly teach relationships.
3. We reject and condemn the notion that Genesis 1 and 2 present two different, conflicting creation accounts, possibly from two different authors. While Genesis 1 to 2:4 clearly sets out the successive order and time of God's creation, Genesis 2:5-25 presents the wonderful setting and detailed account of the creation of man and woman, describing this in more detail, as well as the divine institution of marriage. The accounts of Genesis 1 and 2 are complementary, not contradictory, as our Lord himself teaches in Matthew 19:4-5.

4. We reject the vain attempt to discredit the Mosaic account of the creation by suggesting that the term 'firmament', in Genesis 1:6, describes the primitive, Babylonian concept of a three-storied universe, with a solid iron or brass vault separating the heavens, as the abode of the gods, from the earth as the realm of man. We understand that the term 'firmament' in the original Hebrew indicated something 'stretched out', hence the expanse of the heavens or the sky (cf. Job 9:8; Psalm 104:2; Isaiah 42:5; 44:24; 51:13; Jeremiah 10:12; 51:15). It is an unworthy caricature of God's Word to inject primitive pagan ideas into the text, especially when it is held that such primitive notions were accepted as factual by the author in his simplicity, but need not be accepted by us with our much more advanced knowledge. This clearly destroys the authority of God's Word in such matters and makes man the judge of Scripture. In most cases myths and legends that have any reference to scriptural truths, are simply corruptions of those truths, which arose later, and not the other way around, that biblical truths are refinements of pagan myths.
5. We reject and condemn the unscriptural notion that even though the Bible clearly implies the unity of the human race from Adam, yet, because it cannot be used as an 'ethnological book in the scientific sense of that word', we may believe or conjecture that there could have been another branch of the human race not descended from Adam and Eve. St. Paul deliberately relates the effectiveness of Christ, as the second Adam, with the fact that the first Adam brought sin to all mankind (Romans 5:12-21).
6. We reject and condemn as false, anti-scriptural myth, any theory that would make man or other creatures the products of evolutionary change from simple to complex organisms, for this deliberately ignores and rejects the clearly stated, scriptural account of God's creation. God's Word teaches the creation of creatures in kinds which reproduce according to their kinds. This does not deny the possibility of limited variation within those kinds.
7. We reject and condemn the various 'scientific' theories of the origin of the universe, such as the 'steady state' theory (that in the universe new matter is constantly being created or evolving), the 'big bang' theory (that the universe began with a gigantic explosion and that it will continue to expand, all galaxies flying into space indefinitely), and the pulsating or 'oscillating' universe theory (that all matter is flying apart from a previously compacted mass, and will eventually slow down, stop, and begin to contract till it becomes so condensed that it will explode again, and repeat this cycle indefinitely). These theories reject the scriptural order of creation that the sun, moon, and stars were created after the earth, as well as the biblical truth that there will be an end to this world (2 Peter 3:10-12).
8. We reject and condemn every attempt to destroy the unity of the creation account in Scripture, by professing to 'find' conflicting and contradictory sources in the account (such as the foolish JEDP source theory), which have allegedly been put together loosely by some editor (redactor). While it is possible that a number of sources may have been drawn upon (such as God's own account to Adam, Adam's 'genealogical report', Noah's 'log book', etc.), such sources cannot be definitely determined, and if they were used by the author, then, under the inspiration of God, they were woven into a harmonious whole that sets forth the truth of God, to be accepted and believed by his church in all ages. To postulate other sources injected into the text after the writing of the inspired author, especially in a way that alters his intended meaning, is an attack upon the inspiration of Scripture.

9. We reject as inconsistent folly, the so-called 'pigeon hole' approach that would see nature and religion as two unrelated disciplines, so that one can, with one's 'scientific mind', accept the theory of evolution, yet in faith hold the teaching of creation. God's revelation in nature can never be inconsistent with his revelation in Scripture: therefore the world-view of a Christian should be consistent with the clear teaching of God's Word.
10. We reject as contrary to Scripture the belief that the death of human beings has been a part of nature since life first appeared on earth. This belief, that death is something purely natural, is contrary to the assertion of God himself that everything he created was very good, and it undermines the need for Christ as the Saviour from sin and death (cf. Genesis 1 and 3; Romans 5).
11. We reject and condemn the idea that the account of the great flood of Noah's day is only a myth, built upon some local flood that did not cover the whole earth. This notion is rejected by the clear account of that event in Genesis (which says that the whole world and all life were affected), and by the teaching of Christ that the last judgment, which will come upon this world, is related to the previous judgment of the whole world in the great flood (Matthew 24:37-39).

## Article 21

### THE IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

For hundreds of years the church has consistently proclaimed her faith that the souls of true believers will be received into the glorious presence of Christ immediately at the death of their bodies. She has comforted the bereaved with the assurance that their loved ones, who have fallen asleep in Jesus, are at home with their Lord, even while their earthly remains are being lowered into the grave. Even in hymns, liturgical prayers and other exhortations, the church has confessed her faith in the continued existence of the soul after the death of the body. She has understood the assurance of the Lord, that those who have believed in him will never die (John 6:47; 11:26), despite the obvious truth that all men finally die and are buried, to indicate that the soul of the believer will live on even during the death of the body. This teaching of the immortality of the soul has been of great comfort to Christians throughout the ages.

In recent years however, especially since materialistic psychology has made its influence felt also in the theological world, this traditional belief of the church has been questioned and challenged. Some have charged that it is a pagan Greek or Platonic idea to speak of the immortality of the soul. They insist that such a belief has no basis in Scripture. Some have challenged the belief that the soul can continue to exist apart from the body, in death, and especially that it can be said to be in bliss before the resurrection of the body on the last day. Some have even gone so far as to deny that man consists of body and soul (dichotomy) as two entities that can be separated. They insist on the so-called holistic view of man, which sees him as a whole person without separate entities of body, soul or spirit that could be separated in death. They have claimed, therefore, that if man is said to have a soul, or to be a soul, then this soul must share in his death in the same way as the body. In death his soul too must be said to be dead, and will live again only in the resurrection on the last day. They have claimed that it is wrong, therefore, to speak of the resurrection of the body. We should speak rather of the resurrection of the dead, for this includes the whole person - body and soul.

It has furthermore been asserted that the idea of a resurrection was only a relatively late development. There is no revelation of, or knowledge of, a resurrection in the Old Testament, which sees the future of man as grim and hopeless. Those who die are simply gathered up with their fore-fathers in the grave, or are eternally consigned to the underworld, the pit, or sheol. They are not with God. In opposition to the Old Testament, however, the New Testament does give hope for man in a life after death through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead.

Such views caused deep grief and anxiety in the church as many felt that their hope and assurance was being undermined. We for our part believe that the ancient teaching of the church in these matters has essentially been in accord with Holy Scripture.

### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. Accordingly we believe, teach, and confess with Luther, and our Lutheran fathers in the *Small Catechism* (First Article), that man consists essentially of body and soul; the soul being the immaterial part of man - the real self or ego (Luke 12:19-20) - that animates his body and without which the body is dead (dichotomy; cf. Genesis 2:7; 1 Kings 17:21-22; Ecclesiastes 12:7; Luke 23:46; Acts 7:59).
2. We believe that it has not been conclusively shown whether the three terms used in Scripture to describe man, 'body', 'soul' and 'spirit' (1 Thessalonians 5:23) represent three distinct entities called by these names, (trichotomy) or whether the term 'spirit' is simply used as a synonym for 'soul', or as a parallel expression (cf. Luke 1:46-47). In either case the terms 'body' and 'soul' are used in Scripture in contrast to each other in such a way that two natures are definitely indicated (Matthew 10:28).
3. We believe that while the Scriptures sometimes use the term 'soul' to refer to the whole person (synecdoche), and sometimes as a rough equivalent of a personal pronoun (cf. Psalm 103:1; Song of Solomon 1:7; Romans 13:1), or an equivalent of a reflexive pronoun (Matthew 16:26 compared with 'himself' in verse 24), it would be wrong always to understand the term 'soul' in these ways. There are clear instances where the soul is contrasted with the body, so that what is said of the one does not apply to the other (cf. Matthew 10:28).
4. We believe that the traditional description of death as being threefold (spiritual death, physical death, and eternal death) is helpful in understanding the teaching of Scripture in this matter. *Spiritual death*, as the immediate consequence of sin, is the separation of the soul from God (Genesis 2:17; Ephesians 2:1; 1 Timothy 5:6), by which man lost his original righteousness and lives in rebellion against God (Ephesians 2:2-3). *Physical death* is a further result of sin, by which, after man's physical nature has begun to degenerate, his soul finally departs from his body, which then disintegrates and returns to dust (Genesis 3:19). *Eternal death* is the final result of sin, by which those who were not cleansed of sin through faith in Christ, are rejected in hell from the presence of God in body and soul (Matthew 10:28; 25:41-46; Revelation 21:8).
5. We believe that, as a result of Adam's sin, all men by nature are born spiritually dead (Romans 8:8; Ephesians 2:1) so that their souls are in a state of enmity or rebellion against God (Romans 8:7).
6. We believe that the soul of the Christian, who has been regenerated and come to faith through the work of the Holy Spirit, has been restored to life (Ephesians 2:1; Colossians 2:13). This new spiritual life is sometimes referred to as a new nature, or the image of God being restored to man (Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 6:15; Colossians 3:10).

7. We believe that the child of God, whose soul has come to life through faith in Christ, does not need to fear physical death, for sin, the sting of death, has been removed so that death cannot harm him (1 Corinthians 15:55-57). His real self, his soul, does not die, but lives on through the death of his body (John 11:25-26).
8. We believe that the soul of the unbeliever too, survives the death of his body, and is at once excluded from the presence of Christ to eternal torment (Luke 16:23-31). This condition is also described in Scripture as being 'in prison' (1 Peter 3:19-20).
9. We believe that when man dies physically he departs from this physical world of time and space and enters into an eternal state which is beyond our understanding. It is therefore impossible for us to understand and adequately describe the continued existence of man in the interval that, for us, seems to pertain between death and the resurrection on the last day. From the point of view of eternity or timelessness, these two events could coincide. However, in speaking and teaching of these events we can do so only in terms of time and space. We therefore must attempt to speak of them only in the terms, and in the manner in which they are spoken of in God's revelation to man in Scripture - a revelation that is in all respects truthful.
10. We believe that, concerning this intermediate state, the Scriptures speak of the souls of the believers who have departed this life as being in paradise (Luke 23:43), with Christ in bliss and happiness (Philippians 1:23; Revelation 14:13), while the souls of departed unbelievers are said to be 'in prison' (1 Peter 3:19-20) in a state of misery or torment (Luke 16:23-31; John 3:36).
11. We affirm the doctrine of the immortality of the soul, not in the sense that the soul cannot suffer spiritual death (we were all born spiritually dead, Ephesians 2:1), but in the sense that the soul does not cease to exist when the body is dead (Matthew 22:32; Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 5:1-8; Philippians 1:23; Revelation 6:9; 20:4).
12. We believe that there is no incongruity between the teaching of Scripture, that the souls of the departed are either with Christ in bliss or rejected by him in prison (torment), and the other teaching of Scripture that there will be a final judgment when the Lord returns on the last day, to judge the living and the dead. This may seem incongruous to us from the point of view of time, but departed souls are no longer in the realm of time. Moreover, the Bible says of unbelievers that they are judged already (John 3:18), and of those who believe the Son, that they 'shall not come into judgment' (John 5:24).
13. We believe, with the third article of the Apostles' Creed, not in a resurrection of 'whole persons' on the last day, as if the soul is raised and comes to life again together with the body, but in a resurrection of the body (' *carnis* ' in Latin, ' *des Fleisches* ' in German). The very term 'resurrection' presupposes the continued existence of the soul or the real person. If the soul ceased to exist one would have to speak not of resurrection but of a re-creation.

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn the teaching of the ancient Sadducees (Acts 23:8) and modern materialists, that man has no soul or spirit, but that what is called the soul or mind is simply the working of his nervous system or brain.
2. We reject the pagan view that the body of man is sinful while the soul is good, so that a good or perfect soul has to reside in an evil body, until it is freed at last in death. We

believe, rather, that the soul of fallen man is sinful and in need of redemption (Ezekiel 18:4-20). The whole man - body and soul - has been affected by sin in the fall.

3. We reject the view that the soul of man can have no continued existence apart from the body, so that the soul must die with the body, as one holistic unit.
4. We reject the view that it is the soul, as well as the body, that is raised on the last day (whole person). The Bible never speaks of the resurrection of the soul after death. When it speaks of the resurrection of the 'dead' this refers to the resurrection of the body that had died, as the Creed says (' *carnis* ' in Latin and ' *des Fleisches* ' in German). That this was so, in the teaching of St. Paul, is evident from the fact that the Greeks in Athens mocked when he spoke of the resurrection of the dead. They would not have mocked at the thought of a soul living after death, but the idea that a body could live again seemed absurd to them. Clearly the resurrection of the dead was seen to refer to the resurrection of the body.
5. We reject the view that since a soul can have no existence apart from the body, it must immediately enter into some interim, heavenly body at death, where it resides until the resurrection of its original body on the last day.
6. We reject the view that man, after death, lives, not in the sense that the soul continues to exist, but in the sense that he somehow lives only in the memory of God. When St. Paul speaks of being unclothed, and clothed upon (2 Corinthians 5:1-8), it is foolish to think that nothing or some mere memory is thus being clothed.
7. We reject and condemn the view that while the believers may be said to live on in Christ after death, because of the gift of eternal life, even though their souls have died with their bodies, yet, since unbelievers do not have the gift of eternal life, they cannot be said to continue to exist after death.
8. We reject as unscriptural any belief in a soul-sleep after death, which excludes a blessed enjoyment of Christ's presence (Luke 23:43; Philippians 1:23). While the Scriptures sometimes refer to physical death as sleep, in the case of believers, they never speak of the soul as sleeping in death. The term 'sleep' would more appropriately refer to the body in death, which is said to sleep in the dust of the earth (Daniel 12:2).
9. We reject the view that the saints of God in the Old Testament had no knowledge of, or hope for, a life after death. This is specifically rejected by Christ when he finds fault with the Sadducees for thinking that the Old Testament did not teach the resurrection or continued existence of the blessed after death. The oft-repeated words: 'I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob', 'The God of your Fathers', 'I will be your God, and you shall be my people', etc. together with the truth that God is 'not the God of the dead but of the living' (Matthew 22:32), makes the Old Testament full of hope for eternal life. Jesus' major premise here is that God is the God of the living. His minor premise is that God is the God of Abraham. The inescapable conclusion then is that Abraham must be alive, even though his body was buried and lies dead in the cave of Machpelah. Job too, right early, confesses his faith in the resurrection (Job 19:25-27).
10. We reject and condemn every effort to put the Old Testament into conflict with the New, asserting that they are totally opposite also with respect to their teaching of a life after death. Both the Old Testament and the New Testament are God's revealed Word and cannot be in conflict with each other. Jesus himself completely rejected such a view (cf. Matthew 22:32).



11. We reject and condemn, as totally unscriptural, every belief in a purgatory, as a place for departed souls after death, where they must suffer temporal punishments still due to them.
12. We reject and condemn every effort to interpret the words of Scripture in a way to accommodate the views of modern materialistic psychology, which denies the existence of a soul or spirit in man.

## Practical Issues

### THE EXPRESSION OF OUR FAITH

It has always been recognized that those who really believe what the Scriptures teach, or those who trust in Christ with a living faith, will confess him also in their worship and daily life. They will take care that their practice is consistent with their confession and faith. Those, on the other hand, who are careless and indifferent about their worship and practice thereby show that they are not seriously concerned for the truth of Christ. Faith that does not show itself also in a good Christian life is not true faith (James 2:17). For this reason it is possible to deny Christ, not only by rejecting him personally, or denying his truth as in his Word, but by a careless attitude or indifference in worship, which is incongruent with true faith in Christ as our Lord, or by evil conduct which is inconsistent with his truth as revealed in Scripture. Any true confession, which is consistent, will therefore concern itself also with practical issues in the life and worship of the church. The following articles deal with areas where such a confession of Christ has been endangered or denied.

## Article 22

### CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Perhaps no area in the life of the church has been as controversial and as productive of tension and division as the matter of Christian worship. Before the formation of the Lutheran Church of Australia in 1966, members of the two former Lutheran churches (the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia) were taught to look forward to the great blessing of uniformity in worship that would be apparent everywhere when the one church was formed, so that they would feel at home anywhere in the church. Exactly the opposite has been the result. There is now a much wider diversity of worship forms, styles and moods being practised in the church than before. This reflects also the chaotic situation in the worship of Christian churches throughout the world today. Someone has said that the churches of today have lost the art of Christian worship.

Mere diversity in the forms of Christian worship, however, does not disturb us unduly because we uphold the Lutheran principle that it is not necessary for the church 'that rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike' (Augsburg Confession VII).

What does disturb us, however, is the attitude that lies behind many of the modern innovations and the direction that they are taking. This has been openly acknowledged to be a rejection of the traditional reverence in divine worship to a form of 'worship that seems to be in tune with our daily life', employing the 'spirit of freedom and enjoyment', and involving 'laughter', 'having a good time in church', 'telling jokes', 'singing rowdy songs' and 'watching clowns perform' (The Lutheran, 2 August 1982, p .278).

This attitude and direction has very largely enjoyed official connivance in our church and has now so widely and so successfully infiltrated the church that it seems almost impossible to correct the situation.

On the other hand, those who have opposed this direction have sometimes done so for the wrong reasons and with inept and inappropriate argument, as if change itself were wrong, or the use of modern language and any contemporary art and music were wrong in itself.

Because of this sad situation it is necessary that our confession should make some pertinent statements of our beliefs also on the matter of Christian worship.

### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We solemnly declare that the whole life of a Christian should be a life of worship in the omnipresence of God. Such private worship may express itself in ways and forms or details of prayer that are appropriate only in private communication with God.
2. God, however, calls us to worship him publicly and corporately in the assembly of his children, and promises us his special presence where two or three are gathered together in his name (Matthew 18:20). Such public worship must be distinguished from the private worship of his children. Not everything that is appropriate for private worship is appropriate also for public worship in the special presence of God.
3. We believe, teach, and confess that corporate worship in the Christian congregation should be seen and understood, not merely as some little contemporary act at a particular place and time, but as a part of the universal worship of God by his church of all ages together 'with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven' (Preface, in the *Communion Liturgy* ).
4. It is important to notice from the Scriptures (Colossians 3:16; Psalm 95, etc.) and from many old hymns of the church, that much of the communication in Christian worship is addressed, not only to God, but also to our fellow Christians who worship with us. This highlights the corporate nature of such worship, so that it is not just an individual relating to God, but it is also God's children relating to one another in his presence.
5. We believe that all true worship of God will be governed by two overarching attitudes, moods or emotional states which correspond to the Law and Gospel. These are *humility* (reverence) and *trust* (faith) respectively, both of which together are essential for every act of Christian worship. Both of these are symbolized in the act of bowing down or kneeling before the Lord. Psalm 95:6 states it clearly: 'O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand.' When people fell down on their faces at the feet of Jesus or knelt before him, this expressed - by the downward motion - their deep humility or the recognition of their own unworthiness to stand before him; and, by going down forward - towards him rather than backwards and away from him - their trust and confidence in him. These are not contradictory but complementary emotional states. Humility-in-trust, or reverence-in-faith is essential to all true Christian worship.
6. We believe that such was the case also in some of the very dramatic incidents of worship both in the New and in the Old Testament. Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:5-6) was commanded to remove his shoes and he was afraid to look upon God, but he was drawn to him, nevertheless. Similarly also, when John fell down at the feet of Jesus as one dead (Revelation 1:17).

7. We believe that in Christ Jesus God encourages us to call him Father, as Luther says: 'so that we may with all boldness and confidence ask him as dear children ask their dear father'. This confidence and trust, enabling us to come to God as to our Father, is most important in Christian worship. If this should be lost, true Christian worship would disappear in anxiety, fear and terror. This is one of the essential differences between pagan and Christian worship.
8. We believe that the Scriptures, also in the New Testament, impress upon us the need for an attitude of humility and reverence in the presence of God. Such reverence is important. Without it confidence and trust degenerate into mere familiarity and commonplace acquaintance.
9. We believe that it is important to realise, also, that Christian worship today can deal with our Lord Jesus Christ only in his state of exaltation where the human nature of Jesus makes full and constant use of his divine qualities. Jesus is no longer in the state of humiliation as he was while on earth. This means that not every close and intimate association with Jesus shown by his disciples during his state of humiliation can be repeated by us towards Jesus in his state of exaltation.
10. We believe that, for truly God-pleasing worship, everything that is introduced into the worship service, whether it be music, art, or other forms, must be appropriate for Christian worship or it will detract from it. The kinds of things that are used and fitted for pagan worship with its revelry and frenzy are not fitting for Christian worship.
11. We recognize the great power of music in particular to affect our emotions and to solicit from us various moods and attitudes or emotional dispositions. From time immemorial the true worship of God has been accompanied by appropriate music and song to assist and to support the Word of God (compare the Psalms and the temple worship, also 1 Chronicles 25). We are aware also that pagan worship too made use of music at times to support and intensify the revelry and frenzy of their worship.
12. We cannot elaborate here in detail precisely which music is fitting and appropriate for Christian worship and which is not. But we must affirm that since it is known that music, even without words, exercises a profound influence upon our emotional state, therefore the church does have a responsibility to be concerned about the kind of music that it can properly employ as appropriate for its worship services. While it may be true that much music produced in a particular age will frequently reflect the popular philosophical mood of that time, yet, in searching for appropriate music of worship, the church cannot be guided simply by what is old, ancient, or classical, but it must, rather, seek to discover what is appropriate in itself. If the overarching mood of a piece of music is one of humility-in-trust, then it may well have a place in Christian worship no matter how modern or how ancient it is.
13. We consider that music or art forms which express many different human emotions, such as, joy, peace, exultation, triumph, courage or grief, etc., may have a place in true Christian worship if they are of such a nature that they are subservient to, and do not replace, the essential humility-in-trust that is characteristic of Christian worship.

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn failure to distinguish between the ongoing private worship, as given by God's children in their private lives, and the public, corporate worship of God's children where two or three are gathered together in Jesus' name. We reject also the consequent, fallacious assumption that whatever is appropriate for the worship of

God in private is appropriate also in the corporate worship of God. The details of our private prayers and confessions may be quite out of place in public worship.

2. We reject every failure to see corporate worship in the context of the universal church of all ages and with all the hosts of heaven transcending space and time. This weakness is sectarian in nature and frequently assumes the need for worship to be very contemporary, in the sense of utilizing only the culture and jargon of the present times, so as to be relevant to the young people of today.
3. On the other hand, we warn against the refusal to update the service orders into the language of the present day, as if there is something especially sacred about archaic forms and words, or as if modern language cannot express the proper sanctity of worship. While indeed the sacred character and proper respect of worship must be maintained, yet there may be reasons why our worship should be presented in such language as is attuned to the thinking and experience of mature persons as well as the youth of today.
4. We reject and condemn that approach to Christian worship that evaluates its worth by the emotional 'high' or 'kicks' that one can get out of it. It is not our subjective religious experience that is the important thing, but the objective presence of God and his coming to us in Word and Sacrament.
5. We reject and condemn, therefore, the man-centred (subjective) view of worship that places a great deal of importance upon involvement, participation and spontaneity, as if there is special merit in having everyone involved by taking a turn at doing this and that.
6. We reject in particular the public involvement of women in worship services to take leading, speaking roles, by reading the lessons, distributing the Sacrament and pronouncing the blessing, etc., when God's Word requires women to be silent in the services (1 Corinthians 14:34).
7. We reject and condemn every abuse of worship that would, by whatever means, replace the essential, overarching attitude of humility-in-trust that is so central to Christian worship, and the substituting for it of some other predominant attitude, such as light-hearted happiness, exuberance, defiance, rebellion or fear, etc.
8. We reject and condemn every attempt to exclude from our worship the gospel-orientated attitude of trust and faith so that God does not appear as 'our Father in heaven' but as a stranger and an avenging judge, with the attitudes of fear and anxiety alone predominating. Similarly, we reject and condemn every device whereby the law-orientated attitudes of reverence and humility would be totally eliminated from our worship, so that it degenerates into a frivolous exercise, regarding God with familiarity as a 'chum' or 'buddy'. In either such case worship ceases to be Christian.
9. We deplore and condemn the refusal of many in the church to acknowledge what was known and accepted in all other ages, namely that music has a meaning and a message of its own, quite apart from the words that may be set to it (1 Chronicles 25:1-3). While men choose to remain under such an illusion all talk about appropriate and inappropriate music in worship is empty and meaningless, and no valid or useful judgments on these matters can be made. In the event of music itself being quite meaningless, it would have no more place in a worship service than the sound of a creaking floorboard (1 Corinthians 14:7-12). We regard the humble and trusting worship of the church as of prime importance. Unless the worship of the church is

sound, nothing else will be sound either. It is the first duty of God's people to worship him in Spirit and in truth.

## Article 23

### WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

The God-intended role of women in the church can be recognized and properly appreciated only in the light of God's special creation of man and woman in the beginning, and his unchanging purpose and instructions for them as revealed in the Old and New Testaments.

It not only pleased God to create mankind in his own image or likeness, by a separate act of creation, thus clearly distinguishing them from the rest of the creatures, and giving them dominion over all other creatures on the earth, but it pleased him also to create man and woman separately by two different and distinct acts of creation, indicating a special relationship between them that would reflect his likeness in a unique way.

According to the Scriptures the fact that man was created before woman (Genesis 2:18-24; cf. 1 Timothy 2:12-13), and that Adam was given his life directly from God (Genesis 2:7) - whereas Eve was created from Adam's living body (Genesis 2:22) - is of profound significance for their God-intended relationship.

So also the fact that woman was specifically created for man, in order to provide what was necessary for the two to become one complete human unit (Genesis 2:18; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:9), together with their special complementary differences, within the same flesh and bone nature, are the sources of the most wonderful relationship between man and woman. While humanism sees man and woman as two completely independent individuals or units, Holy Scripture sees man and woman together in marriage as the complete human unit, no longer two, but one flesh (Matthew 19:6).

At the fall it was Eve who was deceived by Satan into eating the forbidden fruit, and who then led Adam into sin, so that he ate of it too. And yet the Scriptures assure us that it was the transgression of Adam, not Eve, that plunged the whole human race into sin. This would not make sense if man and woman were simply equal and independent individuals. It is only because of the scriptural relationship between man and woman, in which Adam was the head and fountain of human life, that his sin, rather than that of Eve, caused the fall of the whole human race. In 1 Timothy 2:12-14 St. Paul indicates that it is partly because of woman's initiative in the fall, that she is now forbidden to teach and exercise authority over man, and is to remain silent in the church. No matter how we may feel about it, woman's role in the fall did, in the judgment of the Holy Spirit, bring certain restrictions upon her.

The order described by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:3, '*God ↔ Christ ↔ man ↔ woman*' was ordained by God in creation and has been observed by the church throughout the ages. This was not some new instruction devised by St. Paul just for the congregation of Corinth.

Part of this divine order is that man is to be responsible before God for his household. Whether he carries out his responsibilities lovingly, in a dominating or repressive manner, or not at all, he is held accountable before God for the care and management of his wife and family (Genesis 3:16; 1 Corinthians 11:3).

The original order and relationship between man and woman, implied by the fact that man received his life directly from God, and woman her life from man, is not to be erased, but is at all times to be evident and respected also in the church and its worship, where, as the apostle Paul says, man is to be seen as 'the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of

man. For the man is not of the woman but the woman of the man' (1 Corinthians 11:7-8). According to St. Paul, this order and relationship also imply that man is to lead in public worship, and that woman is to remain silent (1 Corinthians 14:34-35).

Throughout its long history, the true church of God, both in the Old and the New Testaments, clearly recognized these divinely established differences between men and women, and their distinctive roles in life, as established in the creation order, the fall, and in the New Testament directives. These differences were respected and applied especially in the religious life and worship of the people of God. Accordingly, it was always seen as man's role, as the head of woman, to lead God's people in worship. This was evident in the Old Testament worship, where a special court in the temple prevented women from approaching as closely to the sanctuary as might be done by men.

The fact that women were not to take any leading role in the public worship of God's people, was not the result of the social customs of those times, for the contemporary pagan religions had their gods and goddesses, their priests, and their priestesses, but this was never the case with the worship of the true God. Here God was always revealed in masculine terms, and his people were led in worship by male priests or pastors.

That women have played, and still do play, a major role in the church is self-evident. The history of the church throughout the ages abounds with numerous examples of women whose witness has inspired the people of God. Nobody can read the Gospels without being duly impressed by the devoted witness of many women who followed and served our Lord, who went with him to Calvary and stood afar off (Matthew 27:55), and even at the foot of the cross. Even the woman who anointed Jesus' head with precious oil will be held in respect wherever the Gospel goes (Matthew 26:13). The passing of centuries will not be able to diminish the sweet perfume of the faithfulness and devoted service of numerous women in their precious, supportive role in the church of God.

No matter how times or customs may change, the true church of God must continue to uphold the divinely established order and the differences between man and woman. It must recognize women's special witness in the church, where her true strength lies in meekness and humility. 'The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit... is in the sight of God of great price' (1 Peter 3:4). Even God's strength is sometimes made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). This precious, feminine witness is just as important and glorious in the church, as the leadership and public proclamation of the Word by men.

It was by his great humility - his suffering and death - that Christ too conquered and triumphed over sin and Satan. This might be an offence to the Jews and foolishness to the Greeks, but for us who believe, it is the power of God unto salvation (1 Corinthians 1:23-24). So too, the true power of woman to win her husband (1 Peter 3:1-2), and influence men in God's kingdom, lies in her humble, feminine submission and meekness. This may be foolishness to the self-assured, feminist agitator, but it is the wisdom of God whose foolishness is wiser than men, and whose weakness is stronger than men (1 Corinthians 1:25). This paradoxical power of true femininity, through weakness and submission, is akin to that of the Gospel itself, which forces no one, yet conquers even the mighty. To despise this paradoxical power of woman in gentle submission and feminine reserve, is to fail to appreciate, and to insult, the great wisdom of God.

While the God-intended relationship and differing sex roles were obvious and accepted in the church throughout her long history, yet in very recent times, especially since the demand of feminist philosophy for the shedding of traditional sex roles in society, many, also in the church, have questioned the validity of such sex roles in the church and its worship. They have contended that such traditional sex roles discriminate against women and imply their

inferiority to men. Some have claimed that Galatians 3:28 allows for no differences between men and women in the sight of God, and therefore no such differences should be evident in the life and worship of the church. Others maintained that such an interpretation is an abuse of Galatians 3:28, in which St. Paul speaks about our relationship to Christ, and not our relationship to each other. They contend that God has given women a no less honourable and glorious role in the church, even though she is not to take a leading role in public worship.

It was argued that women's voting in congregational meetings, and at church conventions, could not be shown to be an exercise of authority such as is condemned by St. Paul, and therefore women should be given the right to vote in congregational meetings and as synodsmen. Others denied this, pointing out that the highest, constitutional authority in the church is vested in synodsmen.

Pastors and congregations have also invited women to take leading roles in the public worship of the congregation, reading the scripture lessons and assisting in the distribution of the Sacrament. It was argued that since women, in such situations, would function not on their own authority, but under the authority of the pastor, such practices could not be seen as a violation of St. Paul's injunction forbidding women to exercise authority over men. Others pointed out that it is not the pastor's authority that St. Paul is speaking about in 1 Timothy 2:11-14, but he is there forbidding woman to exercise authority over man (representing Christ, Luke 10:16), so that such speaking or reading is a clear violation of St. Paul's requirement that women should be silent in the churches (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12).

Women have also been given various offices of authority in the church and congregation, not only as committee members, but as church council members and elders in the congregation. Many are contending that women should be ordained to function as pastors in the church. Some even argue that the Bible should be purged of its 'sexist' terminology, and that it is wrong to think that God is essentially male. It is allegedly just as valid to think of God as a female.

Disagreements on this matter of the function of women in the church and its worship, range from varying interpretations of certain passages of Scripture regarding women, to questioning of the whole relevance of gender, sex, and sex roles in the religion and worship of God's people.

We for our part believe with the ancient church of God, that the teachings of Scripture in all of these matters are essentially clear, and that the church of our day is bound by these teachings of God's Word, despite modern trends and conditions. We are convinced that it is in her God-ordained role that woman is seen in her true glory and honour. Modern efforts to disregard sexual differences, or to demand that women function in the same way as men in the church, not only ignore the will of God, but ultimately also attack and despise true femininity and womanhood.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. Accordingly we believe, teach, and confess that God originally created man and woman of equal worth and importance, both sharing in the divine image (Genesis 1:27). This is also implied in Adam's words: 'This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh' (Genesis 2:23).
2. We believe that woman was created to be man's complement, supplying those feminine, human qualities so important for the welfare of mankind (Genesis 2:18; 1 Corinthians 11:9).

3. We believe that man and woman were intended by God to be mutually dependent upon each other, and not independent (1 Corinthians 7:2-4; 11:11).
4. We believe with Scripture and human experience, that men and women were created by God to have different natures and qualities, not only in the area of reproduction, but in all their interests and abilities (Genesis 2:18). These different qualities and abilities are the basis of their differing roles in life. The curse of God placed upon woman and man on account of sin, related specifically to their individual roles. The curse of woman affected specifically her role in child bearing, while the curse upon man affected specifically his role as provider (Genesis 3:16-19). For woman to usurp the role of provider could bring on her a double curse.
5. We affirm our honour and respect for women in their special God-ordained roles as wives and mothers, and we believe that these vital roles of women are as important and glorious as the special roles of men, both in the world and in the church. We believe that the church of our day needs to encourage and reassure women in these most vital and precious roles that are often underestimated and despised by a society with false values.
6. We believe that, inherent in the different roles and functions of man and woman, is the special relationship by which God intended man to function as the head of woman (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:23).
7. We believe and teach that this headship of man over woman implies a relationship in which man is to love and cherish woman, even as the Lord loves and cherishes his church (Ephesians 5:22-23) and woman is to be submissive to man (1 Corinthians 14:34; Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Timothy 2:11).
8. We believe that this headship of man and submission of woman are part of the immutable will of God for an orderly relationship between the sexes, and they are to be respected and expressed, not only in the marriage relationship and in daily life, but also in the public worship of the congregation (1 Corinthians 14:34: 'Let your women keep silence in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but they are to be submissive as the law also says').
9. We believe that this scriptural relationship between man and woman does not detract from woman's true honour and worth in the church or in society, since she is seen and respected, not as some rival or competitor of man, but as his true glory - the object of his honour and respect (1 Corinthians 11:3 and 7). We therefore deplore every effort to undermine this scriptural relationship as a subtle attack upon the true worth and dignity of woman.
10. We confidently affirm with Scripture, that this headship of men and their relationship to women, imply that women are not to take leading roles in the public worship of the congregation, by addressing it, or even asking questions publicly in the service. They are to be silent in respect to these things (1 Corinthians 14:26 and 34-35).
11. We believe that the kind of speaking that is forbidden to women, and the kind of 'silence' that is required of them in 1 . Corinthians 14:34, is defined in the context of this passage, not as the absence of all audible sounds (including singing and coughing) but as speaking in the assembly, either to lead the worship (teaching, prophesying, interpreting, etc.) or publicly seeking answers to their questions (1 Corinthians 14:35).



12. We believe that the order described by the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:3, '*God ↔ Christ ↔ man ↔ woman*', is part of the orderly arrangement of God. Any violation of this, also in the worship of the church, is a failure to do things decently and in order, which the apostle condemns (1 Corinthians 14:40).
13. We believe and affirm that, unlike the apostle's injunction for women to cover their heads in worship (1 Corinthians 11:5 cf. *Augsburg Confession*, XXVIII; 53-54), his requirement for submission and silence of women in public worship (1 Corinthians 14:34-37; 1 Timothy 2:12-14) was not simply a custom (1 Corinthians 11:16), or some temporary pastoral advice intended for the congregation at Corinth, and other congregations experiencing similar problems, but is part of the immutable will of God that is applicable for all time. This is clearly indicated in the passages themselves when they claim to teach the 'law' and the 'commandments of the Lord' (1 Corinthians 14:34 and 37), and appeal to the very 'creation' and 'fall' as their authority (1 Timothy 2:11-14).
14. We believe and affirm that it is the inspired judgment of the apostle Paul, and therefore the judgment of God himself, that women's speaking in church, in the sense of leading the public worship, is disorderly, or contrary to God-ordained order (1 Corinthians 14:40), and an exercise of authority over man (1 Corinthians 14:35), whether modern people recognize this or not. Those who fail to see it this way need to take instruction from the inspired judgments of God in his Word.
15. We believe that, far from our human sexuality's being meaningless or irrelevant in the worship of the church, it is seen by the apostle Paul as having implications, and mystical significance, far beyond our present understanding, which involve us as earthly images reflecting the precious relationship between Christ and his bride the church. In this way our sexuality in worship is related to the very heart of the Gospel, so that we need to be most careful to conform our conduct in this matter to the will and order ordained by God (cf. Ephesians 5:32).
16. We believe and confess that, while we today may not fully understand or appreciate why the Lord has enjoined upon his church to have male pastors and not female, or why men and not women should proclaim the Word of the heavenly bridegroom to his bride the church, yet to ignore, or even exchange such sexual roles ordained by God, might well involve the church in the most serious spiritual distortions. If true worship, with sex roles as ordained by God, is intended to depict the spiritual marriage relationship between Christ and his bride, and the worship of false gods is regarded as spiritual adultery, the exchange of sex roles in worship might well constitute a most shocking, spiritual distortion, utterly abhorrent to the Lord.
17. We believe that while the Bible repeatedly teaches that woman is to be submissive to man, and refers to her as the weaker vessel (1 Peter 3:7), this in no way suggests that woman is inferior, or less important and less effective in God's kingdom than man. The Scriptures, rather, indicate that this very weakness - this meekness and submission - is a woman's true strength and glory, by which she can accomplish more than she could by other means (1 Peter 3:1-2).

## NEGATIVE

1. We reject and condemn the modern, humanist view that man and woman are to be regarded as independent individuals, differing only in their reproductive functions, but otherwise identical and interchangeable in all their roles and functions, so that whatever is fitting and proper for man, is necessarily fitting and proper for woman, and vice versa.
2. We reject and condemn the modern, unisex philosophy that would play down the God-ordained differences between man and woman, and their respective roles in life, or that would try to make women conform to masculine patterns or interests.
3. We condemn and deplore the modern trend to downgrade woman's femininity, as though it were her unfortunate weakness that she has to live with. This does not give true honour and glory to woman, but is rather an insult to her God-given femininity, and fails to recognize and appreciate her special importance as a woman, distinct from man.
4. We reject and deplore the malicious, modern attack upon the most vital and precious, feminine role of women, especially as housewives and mothers - a role that has brought inestimable blessings upon mankind morally and spiritually. This attack upon woman's God-ordained role, also in the church, has not only undermined the confidence and self-esteem of women, but has done great damage in the divine institutions of marriage and the family, as well as to the morality of society generally.
5. We reject the notion that St. Paul, in Galatians 3:28, teaches that there is to be no difference in the function and role of men and women in the life and worship of the people of God, and that therefore his teaching of the headship of man, and the submission of women, cannot be applied to the worship of the church. This is specifically contradicted by St. Paul himself, who stresses and emphasizes the differences between men and women that are to pertain to worship (1 Corinthians 11:3-16; 14:26-37; 1 Timothy 2:12-14). While men and women are the same in their relation to Christ, they are not the same in relationship to each other.
6. We reject and condemn the deceptive argument that, although St. Paul's words are very general, and do not specifically refer to any particular circumstances (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12-14), yet they should be understood by us to be merely pastoral advice for a particular circumstance at Corinth, and so are not applicable generally today.
7. We reject and condemn the argument that, since the apostle Paul, in forbidding women to speak in church, is really concerned that they should not exercise authority over man, therefore any speaking that does not appear to us to show insubordination or independent authority, may be permitted to men and women alike. The apostle Paul clearly implies that, for women to speak and not to be silent in the church, is to fail to be 'under obedience' or to 'usurp authority over man' (1 Corinthians 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:12). Our concepts of what it means to exercise authority must be determined by what the apostle teaches, and not the other way around.
8. We reject and condemn the argument that, since the apostle Paul, in forbidding women to speak in church, is concerned about good order in the church, any speaking by women in the church which is done in an 'orderly' way may be permitted, notwithstanding the apostle's injunction to be silent. The disorder that St. Paul condemns is just that of women's speaking in the church (1 Corinthians 14:34-40),

and it is entirely illicit to allow our concepts of 'good order' to limit or eliminate the apostle's inspired injunction.

9. We reject and condemn the presumptuous assumption that, although the apostle gives as the reason for his requiring women to be silent, that 'it is a shame for women to speak in the church' (1 Corinthians 14:35), yet we must understand that the real reason was, rather, to prevent other disorderly behaviour presumably caused by women in the Corinthian congregation.
10. We reject all suggestions that it was for reasons other than their sexuality, that St. Paul enjoined women to be silent and submissive in the churches. Clearly he forbade them to speak and to exercise authority, not because they were disorderly, nor because they were insubordinate, but because they were *women*. His concern is clearly sexuality and its proper meaning. It is her speaking in the church as a *woman* that is contrary to her role, and therefore against proper order.
11. We reject and condemn the deceptive argument, that we must distinguish between speaking in the church which is simply a reading of the Word of God, or what someone else has written, and speaking with 'independent authority', as in a sermon prepared by the person himself ( *viva voce* ), so that, while the latter speaking is forbidden, the former is not. Such a distinction is nowhere to be found in Scripture. The injunction to keep silent in the churches clearly includes both kinds of speaking.
12. We reject every attempt to describe the offensive speaking of women in the church, condemned by St. Paul, merely as a violation of pastoral authority. Such pastoral authority is nowhere mentioned in the passages concerned. It is insubordination to man, by taking a leading role in the worship, that St. Paul specifically forbids.
13. We reject the distortion of Scripture that asserts that, while St. Paul declares that his injunction is part of the law (1 Corinthians 14:34), and belongs to the 'commandments of the Lord' (1 Corinthians 14:37), yet it should be seen merely as an application of the law that he made for that situation, and so does not bind us today.
14. We reject and condemn the iniquitous argument that, while we may perhaps agree that St. Paul's injunctions were actually a part of the Law, as he says, yet our 'Lutheran understanding of the Gospel' does not require rigid adherence to the prescriptions of the Law, since we are under the 'freedom of the gospel'.
15. We reject and condemn, as false and dangerous, the contention that women may become elders (in the common usage of that term) or pastors in the church, for this is clearly impossible if they are guided by the instruction and commandments of the Lord that 'women [should] keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive as also the law says' (1 Corinthians 14:34), and that they are 'not permitted to teach or to have authority over man, but [should] be in silence' (1 Timothy 2:12).
16. We reject and condemn the scandalous error, that St. Paul contradicts himself by first allowing women to prophesy in the worshipping congregation (1 Corinthians 11:5), and then forbidding them to speak or prophesy in the churches (1 Corinthians 14:34), and that the conflict or 'tension' between these passages must be allowed to stand. Evidently both the nature and place of this prophesying was different in each of the incidents. Scripture must interpret Scripture.
17. We reject and condemn every suggestion that God could just as well be thought of as female, or be described in female terms, as in male terms, for he is not a sexual being.

This is quite contrary to God's revelation of himself throughout Holy Scripture. We believe, rather, that he is truly male over against his bride the church, and that our sexuality is rather an earthly picture or image of those heavenly realities (cf. Ephesians 5:22-33).

18. We condemn and oppose the modern effort to rid the Bible of so-called sexist terms and expressions. We believe that these are a necessary part of the revelation of God to man, and we need to be instructed by them rather than eliminate them, especially in an age that likes to be offended by 'sexist' terminology.
19. As to the question of whether women may vote in congregational meetings, and become synodsmen to represent congregations, and participate in administering the church's business, we reject the view that this can be decided on the basis of Galatians 3:28 (that there is no difference between man and woman in Christ). We hold that the headship of man and the submission of woman is to be everywhere in evidence, especially in the worship of the church, but also in the voters' meeting and synodical conventions of the church. While 1 Corinthians 14 is clearly speaking concerning the worship service, it cannot be shown that St. Paul had only the worship service in mind. First Timothy 2:11-14 is clearly far more general than a worship context. The question whether women may vote in congregational meetings, and act as synodsmen, must be decided on the basis of whether or not such voting and acting as synodsmen are consistent with St. Paul's injunction for women not to exercise authority, but to be in submission. While women may vote without speaking or debating (in silence), it is very questionable whether they can act as synodsmen without exercising authority over man. This would have to be shown clearly before such a practice could be justified. This matter is not so apparent to many for the reason that the functions of voting and being synodsmen were not practised in the time of the apostles, and were therefore not specifically addressed in the Scripture, as was the matter of worship. However, the clear principle of the headship of man, and the submissiveness of woman, must at all times and circumstances be applied in the life and work of the church.

In addition, as long as it is conscientiously held by some that it is an exercise of authority for women to act and vote as synodsmen, we believe that it would be a sin of offence for the church to encourage such activity for women (cf. 1 Corinthians 8:9-13).

20. We reject and condemn the shallow and materialistic thinking of those who hold that women are being 'repressed', or regarded as inferior to men, when they are not permitted to perform all the same functions as men in the worship service. Such people fail to see or appreciate any other honour and power than that of authority and compulsion. Even God's strength is made perfect in weakness (1 Corinthians 12:9). So woman's true strength is perfected in meekness and humility. This is to be the nature of her special witness in the church, and this is no less important or glorious than the public proclamation of the Word and the exercise of authority by men.
21. We reject and deplore the immature and arrogant spirit, which poses as a true liberator of the church, by despising the traditions of our fathers and attacking the historic practices of the church, in order to follow the popular trends of our times.

## Article 24

### THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT

The rise of the Pentecostal movement has influenced many Lutherans and people within other churches. There are some positive aspects in the movement which other Christians might well emulate, including a readiness to pray, apparent warmth in the welcoming of newcomers, an attitude of joy and expectation in worship, a spirit of openness to God, a consciousness that God is close at hand in the details of the individual's everyday life, a serious assessment of demonic forces, and a strong emphasis on the priesthood of all believers. The most distinctive and most serious tenet of the charismatic movement is the notion of subsequence. That is, it is said that a person who receives Baptism at one point in time may normally expect to receive Baptism with the Spirit at a later point in time. The effect of this is to diminish the place of Baptism in favour of a more highly regarded subsequent experience, often referred to as 'the baptism of the Spirit', and sometimes equated with speaking in tongues.

Some Charismatics are influenced by the Pentecostal insistence on 'believers' baptism', rejection of infant Baptism, and insistence on Baptism by full submersion.

There are often examples of both subtle and crass legalism, and a tendency to cause divisions in established congregations. Legalism is apparent also in the tendency to equate renewal with a particular life-style or observable changes in the life of an individual. Sometimes they speak of renewal apart from any real relationship to Baptism and repentance. Legalism is evident also in stereotype expectations of actions like the laying on of hands, and sometimes in a tendency to speak about faith in relation to healing in such a way that if a person is not healed he is made to feel guilty, and to imply that he has no faith.

There is a tendency to focus on a small range of the charismatic gifts, rather than on the wide range of them in the New Testament, and the legalistic suggestion is frequently made that, if a person is not involved in the particular charismatic gifts of prophecy, speaking in tongues, and healing, he is either not charismatic or even not Christian.

There is a tendency to down-play first-article abilities, such as reason, 'which are part of God's creation, and to down-play the theology of the cross in favour of a kind of triumphalism, which focuses instead on the Holy Spirit and his gifts. When other charismatic gifts are mentioned (such as 'discernment') they are often presented on a direct-intuitional level, and lose their proper relatedness to the Word.

Charismatic people are often syncretistic in the sense that they often overlook major differences in doctrine that have divided churches for centuries, and speak and act as if such differences were unimportant in comparison with common charismatic bonds. There is sometimes among Charismatics a lack of interest in the charismatic gift of discerning the spirits, and an apparent lack of concern that pagan and Satanic groups have also been able to produce manifestations such as miracles and speaking in tongues. There are disturbing aspects about what Charismatics call 'being slain in the Spirit'. While in all scriptural accounts people fall on their faces in the presence of the Lord (1 Corinthians 12:2; 14:25), in charismatic practice people regularly fall backwards.

A surrender of mind and will is asked of people at certain points in some charismatic meetings, particularly when they are seeking the charismatic gift of speaking in tongues. We would question whether such surrender is the appropriate attitude for the Christian, who is to wear the full armour of God (Ephesians 4:27; 6:10-18).

One of the problems of the charismatic movement is a disinclination to use any other translation of the Bible than the *King James Version*. Some of the chief errors of the

movement rest on places where the *KJV* has translated very badly. For example, 'since ye believed' Acts 19:2, instead of 'when you became believers'; 'baptisms', Hebrews 6:2, instead of 'ceremonial washings'; and 'Do all speak with tongues?' in 1 Corinthians 12:30, instead of 'Not all speak with tongues, do they?'; and it uses the same word 'gift' for both the 'gift' of the Spirit as for 'charismatic gift'.

Some Charismatics tend to speak very glibly of the will of God, show a readiness to equate personal desires or hunches with the will of God, speak as though God made direct revelations of his will through prayer or speaking in tongues, or suggest that it is never the will of God that Christians should have periods of sickness or be incapacitated in any way. These tendencies suggest a dangerously superficial view of faith in the Gospel. There is a tendency in the charismatic movement to look selectively at passages of Scripture. For example, in Acts 19:1-7 the fact that Apollos knew only the baptism of John is often overlooked, and the impression given is that the twelve or so disciples at Ephesus basically lacked speaking in tongues, whereas in fact what they really lacked was Christian Baptism. There is a tendency in the charismatic movement to miss important exegetical points in the New Testament. For example, the use of the Greek ingressive aorist often points to Baptism as the beginning of Christian faith and the beginning of new life in Christ (Compare Acts 11:16-17, where Peter and the other apostles trace their faith in Christ back to their own Christian Baptism on the day of Pentecost, and baptismal references to becoming believers, being sealed with the Spirit and beginning to walk the new life: Acts 19:2; Romans 6:4; 2 Corinthians 1:21-22; Ephesians 1:13).

There is among some Charismatics a tendency to interpret aspects of the style of writers like Luke in the interest of Pentecostal subsequence. It is part of the style of Luke to refer to initiation into the Christian faith by mentioning merely one aspect of it and implying the rest. For example, Peter promised the hearers at Pentecost the gift of the Spirit, and Luke reports merely that then they were baptized (Acts 2:38-41); Ananias promised Saul that he would be filled with the Spirit; and Luke merely reports that he was baptized (Acts 9:17-18).

There is a tendency among some Charismatics to refer almost every mention of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament to speaking in tongues. In fact relatively few books of the New Testament mention speaking in tongues. Speaking in tongues is referred to only three times in Acts. On each occasion it comes to all in the group at once when it was unexpected (Acts 2:4-8; 10:46; 19:6). In none of these three cases was speaking in tongues the only manifestation of the presence of the Spirit. The speaking in tongues on the day of Pentecost was probably different from that mentioned in 1 Corinthians 14, because the hearers understood their own dialects directly without interpreters.

There is a tendency among some Charismatics to accept references to Baptism in the New Testament only when the Greek word for 'baptize' is explicitly used in a given verse. It is clear from the wider context in John 3 (see v. 22-26) that the language in v. 3-7 is baptismal, and there are not two births, one of water and one of Spirit, but one re-birth, of water and Spirit. Titus 3:4-7 should also be acknowledged as baptismal.

It is probable that many people involved in the charismatic movement are people who tend to react emotionally rather than rationally to situations. This should in itself not lead to division from the Lutheran Church, but there is a challenge here to the church to meet the needs of such people correctly.

## AFFIRMATIVE

1. We point out that, when the New Testament distinguishes being baptized with water and being baptized with the Spirit, the contrast is invariably between the baptism of John the Baptist and Christian Baptism (Matthew 3:11; John 1:26, 33; 3:5-7; Acts 1:5).
2. We point out that though Jesus was baptized with the baptism of John, in his case the descent of the Holy Spirit came together with his Baptism (Matthew 3:16).
3. We believe, that the Holy Spirit has a double relationship to Baptism, both as the agent of Baptism, and as the gift in Baptism (1 Corinthians 12:13).
4. We believe, teach, and confess that the practice of infant Baptism is thoroughly scriptural. Children are included in 'all nations' in Matthew 28:19. Children are specifically included in Acts 2:38-39. Several important baptismal passages use the words 'all' and 'all who', and 'everyone' before mentioning benefits of Baptism (Acts 2:38; 10:44; Romans 6:3; 1 Corinthians 10:2; 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27). Infants, too, as flesh born of flesh, need to be born again (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:4-7). In the Old Testament male infants were circumcised on the eighth day; and in Colossians 2:11 Paul refers to Baptism figuratively as a circumcision made without hands, without any hint that infants are not eligible for it. The examples of Baptisms of whole households mentioned in the New Testament, while not absolutely conclusive on their own, indicate the apostles' practice. Households at that time often included families of slaves as well so that children were, very likely, involved in these instances (Acts 11:14; 16:15,33; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:16).
5. We believe, teach, and confess that the gift of the Spirit is not a charismatic gift that the Spirit gives, identified with speaking in tongues, but the Father's gift of *the Spirit himself*. In the phrase 'the gift of the Spirit' 'gift' is never used in the plural (Acts 2:38; 8:20; 10:45; 11:17). The reception of the Spirit is equated with the reception of the Christian faith itself (Galatians 3:2-4). Except in unusual circumstances (e.g., Acts 2:4; 10:44 - but compare Acts 10:47-48 and Acts 11:16-17), the gift of the Spirit came together with Baptism (Acts 15:8-9). On the day of Pentecost the Spirit was poured out on the first group of disciples before they were baptized (Acts 2:1-4; 11:16-17). When there was a temporary separation of the gift of the Spirit from Baptism, the unusual separation had some particular purpose. The reasons for the giving of the Spirit before Baptism at the household of Cornelius are clearly set out (Acts 10:14, 45; 11:1, 17, 18), and the temporary separation itself underlines the fact that the gift of the Spirit and Baptism normally come together. The baptism of the Samaritans without the gift of the Spirit, and their subsequent reception of it with the laying on of hands in Acts 8:5-17 (see v. 16 in particular) should not be taken as the pattern for the normal experience of Christians today.
6. We point out that it is proper to trace the origin of the Apostles Creed and of the Nicene Creed to the baptismal practice of the early church. In fact the Creed is basically a collection of passages in the New Testament where the word for 'baptize' is followed by the preposition meaning 'into' and an object. A systematized listing results in 'baptized into the name of the Father' (Matthew 28:19), 'baptized into the name of the Son', 'baptized into Christ Jesus' (Matthew 28:19; Galatians 3:27), 'baptized into his death' (Romans 6:4), and by implication, into his burial and resurrection (Romans 6:4; Colossians 2:12); 'baptized into the name of the Holy Spirit' and 'baptized into the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19; Acts 19:2-3; compare John 3:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Titus 3:5); 'baptized into Christ's one body' (the church, 1

Corinthians 12:13); and 'baptized into the forgiveness of sins' (Acts 2:38). This series emphasizes the truth that Baptism is a means by which God offers, conveys, and seals the benefits won for us by Christ.

7. We believe, teach, and confess that faith is related to Baptism in a double way. Faith is the reception of the blessings that God has placed in Baptism, and faith is also worked by God through Baptism (Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 2:12). Faith justifies without works, and faith is not a work (Romans 3:28; Ephesians 2:8-9). Though faith clings, actively and even desperately to Christ as its object, the reception of faith is purely passive. It is worked by the Holy Spirit through the Word (John 6:44; Ephesians 1:18). There is no better example of justification by faith alone without merit or works than infant Baptism. It is important to recognize that the blessings that the Scriptures ascribe to Baptism are the same benefits as they ascribe to faith: the forgiveness of sins, salvation, re-birth, regeneration or renewal, entrance into the kingdom of God, the gift of the Spirit, adoption as God's children, incorporation into the one body of Christ, justification, sanctification, being united to Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection, and being clothed with Christ as a garment ( John 3:3-5; Acts 2:38; Romans 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 6:11; 12:13; Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 2:12; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21).
8. We understand that the 'seal of the Spirit' (2 Corinthians 1:21; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30) refers to Baptism.
9. In the light of the full lists of charismatic gifts in the New Testament (Romans 12:6-9; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, 28-30; 13:1-3, 8-10; 1 Peter 4:8-12) we believe, teach, and confess that God gives charismatic gifts in different ways and in different measures to every Christian (1 Corinthians 12:4-5,11; Hebrews 2:4). The lists include such non-spectacular gifts as service, teaching, encouraging, helping, generous giving, leadership, showing mercy, and hospitality, alongside more arresting ones like healing and heroic faith that moves mountains. Some of these are word-related, and some are focused on assistance to others. Christians should thankfully accept, and use properly, humbly, and soberly, every charismatic gift that the Lord graciously gives, where and when he wills (Romans 12:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12:11; Hebrews 2:4). All believers need to pray constantly to the Holy Spirit to give them power to serve others, in word and in deed. We believe that, with the exception of the office of apostle, probably also that of prophet, the full range of charismatic gifts may occur among Christians today. We do not assert that the manifestation of speaking in tongues could have occurred only in the apostolic age (1 Corinthians 14:39). Tongues 'will cease' (1 Corinthians 13:8) when that which is perfect comes, when we shall know just as we are known, when prophecy and knowledge will also be done away with (v. 8-12). Particular charismatic gifts should not be required from every Christian (1 Corinthians 12:28-31). The answers to the questions in 1 Corinthians 12:29-31 are all 'No'. By contrast, the manifold fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) should be expected of every Christian, as the higher gifts of faith, hope, and love should be expected of every Christian (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13).
10. We believe that the charismatic gifts should be understood as given by the three persons of the Trinity, not appropriated only to the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). The Lord Jesus also gives them for service, and God the Father also gives them to empower people. Many of the charismatic gifts should be seen in relationship to the first article of the Creed. God gives us the ability to think and use our reason as part of his creation (though reason may be misused). Before his conversion a person may be



a skilful teacher, and when he is converted that natural gift not only remains, but is sanctified, re-directed, and transformed. Many of the charismatic gifts are word-related, like prophecy, word of knowledge, word of wisdom, interpretation, and discerning the spirits. The mind, which God has created, is involved when a person applies the Word, and is edified. Paul wants to pray with his mind as well as with his spirit. The charismatic gifts are also related to the second article. The Spirit points people to Christ. It is the Gospel above everything else that builds u p, or edifies.

11. We assert that the purpose of all the charismatic gifts is to serve the common good of other members of the body of Christ, to edify, help, and encourage others. Prophecy is more useful than tongues because it builds u p, edifies, instructs, consoles, and seeks the common good of brothers and sisters in Christ. Tongues do not edify others unless they are interpreted (1 Corinthians 12:7; 14:3-4, 5d, 12, 17b, 19b, 24-26, 31b).
12. Prophecy in the New Testament often means special revelation, and includes prediction of future events (Acts 2:30-31; 11:28; 21:10-11; Romans 11:25). Prophecy is not merely prediction of future events. After the close of the New Testament canon it does not include new doctrinal revelation. One of the elements of prophecy was proclamation of the Word of God, and special application of it. On certain special occasions the Spirit intervened to guide the missionary endeavours of men like Paul (Acts 13:2, 4; 16:7, 9; 20:22-23; 21:4, 10-11). We cannot specify in each case how these directions came. Prophecy also had to be subjected to word-related testing (1 Corinthians 14:32; 1 John 4:1-6). Some scholars hold that the last Christian prophet was the apostle John, and that there are good grounds for believing that the office of prophet, like the office of apostle, came to an end with the apostolic age.
13. We point out that some of the spiritual gifts were also wrongly used at Corinth. In spite of their rich range of charismatic gifts (1 Corinthians 1:7) the Corinthians were jealous, and had split into quarrelling cliques (1:10-12; 3:1-4); and they had a false triumphalism (4:8-13). They were puffed u p by knowledge (8:2). Against these, Paul interposed the 'foolishness' of Christ's cross (1:18-2:16), for that is ultimately what is spiritual. Paul contrasted ironically his own sufferings with that triumphalism (1 Corinthians 4:8-13; 2 Corinthians 10:1-12:10). From 1 Corinthians chapters 13-14 it is clear that there was disorder and lack of love in the Corinthians' use of charismatic gifts. If their use splits a congregation today, drives people away from faith and worship, repels newcomers, or is marked by boastfulness or pride, the charismatic gifts have been misused (1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 14:6-33). When the charismatic gifts are recognized and used as gracious gifts of God, they will result in the building up of other Christians and lead to thanksgiving rather than envy and the promotion of self. There is a very real danger that people become unspiritual in hankering for something beyond the unspectacular Gospel of Christ crucified (the power of God and the wisdom of God) and the Sacraments.
14. We believe, teach, and confess that the doctrine of justification by grace alone should not be confused by undue attention to the gifts of God *in us* . In the past confusion arose when the grace of God (which is the favour in God towards sinful people) was not properly distinguished from gifts of God's grace in people. In the Vulgate Jerome translated both the Greek words for 'grace' and for 'charismatic gift' by the one word *gratia* (grace). This led to the dangerous view, still taught in Roman Catholicism, that a person may be full of God's grace, or have God's grace in him or infused into him. Rather, God's grace remains *in God* . The grace by which we are justified is and remains outside us.

15. We believe that it is a Christian's duty to test the spirits, for they are not all from God (1 John 4:1-6). Some gifts, such as healing, prophecy, and tongues, are ambiguous, in the sense that they may be either divine manifestations, or psychic or demonic manifestations. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets (1 Corinthians 12:10; 14:32). One of the tests is the full confession of Christ, the incarnate Son of God (1 Corinthians 12:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3; Revelation 19:10). These 'gifts' need to be attested, and accepted, by the congregation (1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 John 4:6). Caution is necessary, for it is dangerous, on both sides, to generalize glibly about spiritual phenomena. We do not want to attribute to the Devil what may in fact be from the Spirit of God (Matthew 12:24-32), or *vice versa*. On the other hand, some of the phenomena prized by some Charismatics can be faked, may fall into easy stereotypes, or are not even necessarily distinctive of Christianity. In their pagan past the Corinthians were also influenced by 'spiritual' manifestations (1 Corinthians 12:2). God gives remarkable remissions from sickness to unbelievers, too, just as he sends rain on the unjust as well as on the just. Lying signs and wonders, Jesus warned, would be among indications of the last times (Matthew 24:24). One cannot expect that God will attest blatantly false doctrine with signs from the Spirit from above; and the Spirit is not the author of lovelessness and discord, either.
16. We believe that miraculous manifestations in this life, even when they come directly from God, are not ultimate. What are ultimate are the unseen spiritual blessings of God that continue in the life to come, the new creation, eternal life, sonship of God, and so on. Miraculous manifestations have often accompanied the proclamation of the Gospel. However, Jesus did not want faith to rest on signs and wonders. He told the unbelieving people of his day that no sign from God would be given them except the sign of the prophet Jonah (his death and resurrection on the third day, Matthew 12:38-40; 16:4). Prophecy, tongues, and knowledge are not ultimate, because they will be done away with when what is perfect comes (1 Corinthians 13:8-12). Some people who have prophesied, done miracles, and performed exorcisms in Jesus' name will themselves lose salvation (Matthew 7:21-23). Deceptive signs and wonders, Jesus warned, will be one of the features of the time before his return (Matthew 24:24; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:9). Even Satan can masquerade as an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).
17. We believe that though speaking in tongues should not be forbidden (1 Corinthians 14:39), it is far less useful than prophecy, and has more restrictions placed on its use (1 Corinthians 14:1-33, 37-39). Decency and good order require that people have to know that a person who has the charismatic gift of interpreting is present before there may be speaking (or singing) in tongues in public worship, and even then speaking in tongues must be limited to two or at the most three. No matter what people may cite as their experience, this instruction of God's Word must not be ignored. Speaking in tongues in public assemblies must edify others through interpretation. Speaking in tongues should normally occur in private (1 Corinthians 14:4). In public it is not really a sign for believers (1 Corinthians 14:22). Pagan groups have also experienced the phenomena of speaking in tongues, and it has been shown that at least some speaking in tongues in Christian gatherings has been demonic. Christians should therefore be responsible, and beware of accepting speaking in tongues too readily.
18. We believe that when people speak about 'renewal' they must remember what renewal is, and what the means of renewal are. Renewal is not primarily a changed manner of living. The Holy Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies, and, we must add, renews, *by the Gospel* (Matthew 18:18; 26:26-28; Mark 16:15-16; John 6:63; 20:23,

31; Acts 2:38; 2 2:16; Romans 1:16; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Corinthians 5:19; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; 1 Peter 1:23; 3:21). Only to the extent that prophecy, or miracles, or tongues edify with the Gospel are they means of renewal. It must be remembered that though for a person in Christ all things have become new, the new creation is very much an object of faith, not yet of sight (2 Corinthians 4:16-18; 5:16-21). The message of reconciliation is absolutely focal. Furthermore, renewals in the history of God's people have regularly begun with a call to repentance.

19. In some of his miracles Jesus specially commented on faith in those whom he healed. A person who thinks he has been helped by a faith healer, and later finds he has not been, is led to conclude that he has no faith at all, when he should have had his faith strengthened to bear an affliction. We assert that this is dreadful legalism. However, faith was not always required by Jesus as a prerequisite for the person who was healed (Matthew 15:21-28; John 9:35-38). In some circumstances faith and other spiritual benefits came after a healing. People would be far less pre-occupied with faith-healers if they received more genuine compassion and encouragement from fellow-Christians to bear in faith whatever sufferings the Lord graciously chooses to ask them to undergo (Romans 5:3-5).
20. We believe, teach, and confess that prayers for temporal blessings ought to add 'if it is your will' (1 John 5:14). Even Paul's persistent prayer for deliverance from his thorn in the flesh was not answered in the particular way he wanted (2 Corinthians 12:7-10).
21. We affirm that the laying on of hands is not an essential rite or a Sacrament. In the Old Testament it was used in connection with the transfer of sins in offerings, in discharging complicity when a person had witnessed blasphemy, in the installation of a leader like Joshua, or Levites, and in the imparting of a blessing. In his ministry Jesus sometimes used it with healing, and in imparting a blessing, but there was no stereotype. Elsewhere in the New Testament it is sometimes used in public installation after prayer, sometimes with prayer in connection with the bestowal of the Holy Spirit, but again there is no consistent connection between the laying on of hands and the reception of the Holy Spirit. Paul mentions laying on of hands at the ordination of Timothy, when Timothy also received a charismatic gift. Laying on of hands was a witness to the presence of the Holy Spirit, who equipped people for ministry. In several passages laying on of hands has a connection with prayer, and in James 5:14 it is associated with prayer and anointing with oil. In the early church it was used in the reconciliation of penitents, at ordination, and in some benedictions. There is no clearly distinct use of the practice to guide regular practice today.
22. God's will is quite clear in the most important areas, his will to save all people (1 Timothy 2:4) and his will for our sanctified living (Romans 12:2; Colossians 1:9). We can also point to God's will, at least his permissive will, when we refer to the past. We must, however, clearly distinguish between God's work and the Devil's work, and God's government in bringing good even out of the Devil's work. Not everything that was, was right. We cannot say how, in certain instances, Paul and his mission helpers were made aware of God's will for their work (Acts 21:14; Romans 1:10; 15:32; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 4:19; 16:12). There are also aspects of God's will that are too deep for us to understand (Matthew 26:39; Luke 12:49; John 21:22-23; Acts 14:22; Romans 8:27; 1 Peter 3:17; 4:19). It is easy to misinterpret God's will (Matthew 17:4; Luke 9:54). Therefore special care needs to be exercised before anyone says, 'It is God's will that...' We should beware of Satanic delusion, and should fear the curses on

the false prophet who tells a dream and attributes it to God (Jeremiah 14:13-16; 23:21, 25-32; 1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Thessalonians 2:2; 1 Timothy 6:3-4).

23. In many 'personal testimonies' and in much of the seeking of 'experience' and 'confirmation' in the more spectacular charismatic gifts there is a deceptive 'theology of glory'. There is much that remains hidden in the Christian faith. Paradoxically, the closer we are to the humanity of Christ and his sufferings and disgraceful death, the closer we are to spiritual things and to God's glory. Christ overcame the world by patient, humble suffering. How do we know that sickness, failure, or poverty may not be more precious in God's sight than convincing demonstrations that are so appealing to human reason? (See Dr. H. Sasse, 'Theologia crucis', *Lutheran Theological Journal* , Aug-Dec., 1968, 115-127). Though Paul could speak in tongues more than all the Corinthians, any human success stories were nullified by the 'foolishness' of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-31), just as his own life was not a series of glittering triumphs from a human point of view (2 Corinthians 11:23; 12:5-10). It is a serious mixing of Law and Gospel for people to place confidence in their own experiences rather than in the cross of Christ, and its benefits that come through Word and Sacraments (See C.F.W. Walther, *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel* , St. Louis: Concordia, 1928, 127-138). Our certainty must rest on the Christ outside us, not on feelings within us, not on our achievements, or on our spiritual gifts (Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:9, 12).
24. We believe, teach, and confess that Christians should not look to themselves or their own religious feelings or experiences for assurance of faith and salvation, but only to the objective Word and promises of God, and the atoning work of Christ, as they have been revealed in Scripture.

## NEGATIVE

1. We reject and condemn any suggestion that 'baptism with the Spirit' normally occurs without the water of Baptism. We reject and condemn any attempt to refer to Christian Baptism as 'water baptism' because of the wrong implication that Christian Baptism is bereft of the Spirit. In other words the phrase, 'to be baptized with the Holy Spirit' normally includes a literal Baptism with water (Matthew 3:11; Mark 1:8; Luke 3:16; John 1:33; Acts 1:5; 11:16). Being baptized with the Holy Spirit is not separate from, or superior to, Christian Baptism. For the Christian, the only really important subsequent thing after Baptism (which includes renewal, and the gift of the Spirit) is the return of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:4-9).
2. We reject and condemn as legalism the suggestion that some Christians are charismatic and some are not (1 Corinthians 12:7-11).
3. We reject and condemn criticism of any person for the apparent lack of a particular charismatic gift. Different charismatic gifts are given to different Christians in differing ways and proportions (1 Corinthians 12:7).
4. We reject and condemn any suggestion that a particular charismatic gift, be it speaking in tongues, or any other spiritual manifestation necessarily proves that a person has been filled with the Holy Spirit (Matthew 7:21-23).
5. We reject all hankering for something beyond the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper as the means by which God offers, conveys, and seals his promise of grace to sinful people ( *Smalcald Articles* Article III, 8, 3-13; *Large Catechism, Creed* , III, 43-46; *Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration* , II, 80). We reject religious enthusiasm, that is, the idea that God works directly in human beings apart from the

Word and the Sacraments. This common feature was also observed in the Anabaptists at the time of the Reformation, in Pietism, and in the movements that led to the holiness bodies. All these groups overemphasized particular kinds of life, and thought little of doctrine and the Sacraments.

6. We reject any suggestion that ministry can be carried on through charismatic gifts apart from Word and Sacraments.
7. If people have lapsed from the faith and have their faith re-kindled, or if they begin to have a closer walk with God, many terms, such as 'being filled with the Spirit' (Acts 4:8, 31; 6:3; 7:55; 11:24; 13:9; Ephesians 5:18) are permissible for these. However, we reject and condemn as heresy the use of the expression 'being baptized with the Holy Spirit' for these. It is not only impermissible, but, in fact, heretical. Being baptized by water and the Holy Spirit occurs only once in a person's life. Re-baptism is heretical. Being filled with the Holy Spirit may occur repeatedly and in different ways for different purposes. Because the sinful nature remains, no Christian person is completely filled with the Holy Spirit in the sense that he reaches full perfection, even though he is justified and holy in Christ. We reject any suggestion that being filled with the Holy Spirit means that a person no longer sins and no longer needs forgiveness.
8. We reject and condemn the view that faith is the work of man, or decision-making rather than the God-worked means by which we receive, or appropriate, what God has done for us in Christ. Though faith clings, even desperately to Christ its object, in terms of its origin, faith is purely passive being worked by the Holy Spirit, through the Word and through Baptism, in people who were unwilling and resisting.
9. People should not be encouraged to look for miraculous manifestations as supremely important. Rather, they should be pointed to faith in the crucified and risen Christ as supremely important. This is particularly serious in the modern context, where many people who have been baptized now live as pagans, turn away in unbelief from the regenerating power of God, and bring on themselves God's anger.
10. We reject the idea that self-edification is the normal or central thing for a Christian. Edification regularly comes through the revealed Word of God or its exposition. In 1 Corinthians 14:4 'edifies himself' must mean something like 'has heightened emotional awareness', as Scripture nowhere else speaks of any person edifying himself. The discussion of spiritual gifts in the New Testament is regularly associated with the corporate body of Christians.
11. We reject and condemn attempts to ignore the limitations that Paul places on the use of speaking (or singing) in tongues in public meetings in 1 Corinthians 14. Two or at the most three may do so, in turn, and only if someone interprets.
12. We reject attempts to induce speaking in tongues by gradual approximation. We reject and condemn attempts to encourage people to surrender their minds and wills in an attempt to achieve the gift of speaking in tongues. The phenomenon of speaking in tongues is also produced by demons (see Ephesians 4:27; 6:10-18). Speaking in tongues occurs even in pagan religions.
13. We reject and condemn the idea that prayer is a two-way process, in which God reveals things to us as we pray. Our prayers are not a means of grace alongside Scripture.

14. We reject the notion that Christians may glibly call their hunches and wishes the will of God. If a Christian believed a certain course of action was the Lord's will it would be sinful for him to disobey. But the person who says, 'This is what the Lord says...', or 'The Lord told me...' takes on himself the curses attendant on a false prophet if all he tells is his own wish or hunch (Jeremiah 23:16-32).
15. We reject the notion that the Greek word for 'baptize' can only mean 'fully submerge'. The Greek *bapto*, not *baptizo* means 'submerge'. Admittedly Jewish proselyte baptism was by full submersion. However, the usage of the word *baptizo* in the New Testament shows that it was also used of Jewish ceremonial washings, and cannot always mean submerge (Mark 7 :4; Luke 11:38; 1 Corinthians 10:2; Hebrews 9:10, compare Exodus 30:19; Leviticus 9:9, 12; 14:6-8, 51; 16:15, 19, 24; Numbers 19:18, 19, 21). The point of 'burial' in Romans 6:1-4 is not being buried under water, but being joined by Baptism to Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection. The New Testament also uses synonyms like 'wash' and 'pour' for Baptism (Matthew 3:11; Acts 2:17). Stressing the prepositions 'into' and 'out of' in Matthew 3:16 and Acts 8:38-39, to try to show that Baptism means total immersion, proves too much, namely that John the Baptist and Philip who administered Baptism, were also totally immersed on those occasions. The early Christian writing the *Didache* and the architecture of baptismal fonts in the early church also indicate that submersion was not insisted on in the early church. What makes Baptism efficacious is the Word of God with the water, not the amount of water.
16. We reject the view that common possession of charismatic gifts or an individual perception that other people are Christians at heart is the warrant for joint worship when there are unresolved differences in doctrine. True unity must be based on the pure marks of the church (Matthew 28:20; Romans 16:17; Galatians 1:6-9; 5:9; *Augsburg Confession* VII; *Apology* VII-VIII, 20).
17. We reject and condemn, as dangerous deception, every looking within to our subjective feelings and experiences as the basis of hope and assurance of salvation. It is the grace of God in Christ, not in us, that is the foundation of Christian faith and hope, not our feelings of this, our joy, closeness to God, or any gifts that we might have from him. Special caution must be taken about personal testimonies, however glowing, that suggest wrong bases of Christian assurance.

## Article 25

### MATTHEW 18

#### AND THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

In the law of God, as expressed also in the Ten Commandments, the Lord protects us not only from the power and lust of those who would molest us, but also from their evil tongues, and slanderous natures. This is aptly explained by Luther in the *Large Catechism* under the Eighth Commandment. While some, from time to time, have spoken as if the Law no longer applies to Christians, since we are under the 'freedom of the gospel', yet they are quick to appeal to the Eighth Commandment when they feel that their false views are being unduly exposed. Thus it has happened repeatedly, that, when someone has spoken publicly, or written in a way that is believed to be contrary to the truth of God's Word, and this is then publicly criticized, or reported to those entrusted with doctrinal oversight in the church, they insist that such procedure is contrary to the will of God in Matthew 18:15. They claim that

they should have been approached personally and privately first. It has also happened that those entrusted with doctrinal oversight in the church, have refused to consider such reports or act upon them, however public, until such a private approach has been made according to Matthew 18:15. These circumstances have led to a dispute as to whether or not it is always necessary first to speak to an offender privately, if he has publicly propounded views that are contrary to the Word of God. Some have held that this is necessary according to the law of love, and others say that it is not.

In this matter we believe it to be an obvious truth that Matthew 18:15 and the Eighth Commandment were given by God to protect the good names and reputations of penitent sinners from malicious slander and gossip. They are not intended to protect the public scandal-monger from bearing the shame of his wicked life, or to protect the false prophet or errorist from exposure in his evil work of infiltrating the church and corrupting it from within.

### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. Accordingly, we believe with Luther ( *Large Catechism* , Eighth Commandment) that it is necessary to distinguish between sins or offences that are committed privately, and sins that are committed openly or in public.
2. We hold that all sins that are committed privately, so that they are unknown to others or known only to very few, are to be dealt with privately according to Matthew 18:15, whether these are immoral acts against the will of God, or the making of false statements that contradict the truth of God's Word.
3. We believe that our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 clearly sets forth the procedure according to which such sinners should be dealt with: first 'between thee and him alone', then, if he will not repent, in the presence of two or three witnesses, and finally, if he still does not repent, in the presence of the congregation.
4. We believe that the aim of this procedure must be to protect the good name and reputation of the erring brother, by preventing his offence from being publicly known, and to gain him, so that he sees his sin and repents.
5. We believe that public sins are those which are committed openly, or in a way that others can readily know of them, whether these be immoral acts in a person's life, or public teaching, or statements made against the truth of God. The expression 'public' does not necessarily imply that everyone already knows about it, but rather that anyone can know about it, or that such knowledge is readily available.
6. We hold that while an initial, personal approach to such a public sinner may not be against God's will, if it is done out of love and concern for him, the Scriptures clearly enjoin that such sins be dealt with publicly, 'before all so that others also may fear' (1 Timothy 5:20). This was clearly the practice of St. Paul himself in dealing with the hypocritical, public conduct of his colleague Peter at Antioch (Galatians 2:11-14). Such public transgression, until it is publicly rebuked, is an offence to others, and leads them into sin (Galatians 2:13). Hence Luther insists that ' *where the sin is public, the reproof must also be public* ' ( *Large Catechism* 284).
7. We believe with Luther, also that all teaching of false doctrine against the truth of God is in itself a sin against the Eighth Commandment, since it is a use of the tongue to harm and even destroy the neighbour. For anyone to seek to protect himself or others who proclaim false teaching, by appealing to Matthew 18:15 or the Eighth Commandment, then, is like a murderer trying to save himself from the gallows by

appealing to the Fifth Commandment, - Thou shalt not kill. This is a hypocritical use of God's Word.

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject every attempt to set up some kind of indefinable 'law of love' that is above the clear commandments of God, as if true love would act differently from what is defined in the Ten Commandments. These commandments are the law of love (cf. Matthew 22:40; Romans 13:8-10; etc.) for they spell out to us how true love acts.
2. We reject and condemn the view that all sins, whether private or public, must be dealt with in the same way, and that true love requires a private approach, also in the case of public sins, even though this is not called for in Galatians 2:11-14 and 1 Timothy 5:20.
3. We reject, as absurd deception, the attempt to classify as 'public' only those sins which everybody knows. There are probably no such sins at all. Public sins are those committed in such a way that anyone can know of them.
4. We reject every attempt to use Matthew 18:15 or the Eighth Commandment, to protect the proclamation or infiltration of false teaching in the church. We similarly reject every refusal to deal with false teaching on the grounds that a proper approach according to Matthew 18:15 was not made first. The true shepherd of God does not seek to protect the wolves from the sheep, but the sheep from the wolves. It is the hireling that flees, and allows the wolf to do as he pleases.

## **Article 26**

### **IMPRECISE TERMS**

Considerable confusion coupled with a false and dangerous attitude has developed in the church due to an imprecise and careless use of the terms 'teaching', 'doctrine' and 'dogma' and related words. This has resulted in the false notion that somehow dogma occupies a position of greater sanctity and authority in the church than simply teaching, albeit scriptural teaching. Statements have been made, in fact, which imply that the Scriptures teach no more than what the church has elevated to confessional teaching or dogma. The early chapters of Genesis, it has been said, teach only four issues, namely: the creation out of nothing, the creation of Adam and Eve in the divine image, the fall, and the promise of a Saviour. This means that nothing else that is recorded in those early chapters (e.g., the days of creation, the order of creation, the serpent, and the Garden of Eden, nor yet the forbidden fruit) is to be regarded as biblical teaching. In this way the Scriptures and genuine biblical authority have been undermined and reduced to a level below that of the church.

It is necessary, therefore, that we should clearly state our position on this matter and how we shall use these terms in such a way as not to perpetuate this confusion.

### Teaching

## **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We assert that the term 'teaching' is a term that denotes all such instruction or information, of whatever nature, that is presented for our acceptance or belief. Scripture teaching includes everything that the Word of God - the Bible - presents to us for assent and acceptance, whether we can see any relevance to the Gospel or not. When, for example, the Bible gives us the dimensions of the ark, or tells us that



Abraham circumcised Isaac on the eighth day, this is the teaching of Scripture. All teaching of Scripture carries the same authority - the highest authority that the church knows - because it is the Word of God. When the church of Christ engages in teaching, its teachings have authority only when they are the teachings of Holy Scripture. The church has no authority to command acceptance for any teaching which is not the teaching of Scripture.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject, as a dangerous confusion, any use of the term 'teaching' that implies that somehow the mere teachings of Scripture are not as authoritative as those teachings that the church has elevated to the position of 'doctrine' or 'dogma' of the church. Similarly, we reject, as a dishonest manipulation of language, the assertion that what Scripture presents to us as factual information for our acceptance, is, somehow, not to be regarded as the teaching of Scripture unless it can be shown to be related to the Gospel or unless it has been 'dogmatized' by the church in some synod or council.

#### Doctrine

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We affirm that the term 'doctrine' is properly the same as 'teaching' coming from a Latin root. The term 'doctrine' means a body of instruction, information or teaching that is presented for our acceptance as true. In this sense all teachings of Scripture are also properly called 'doctrines' of Scripture. We may say, then, that also the account of the plagues given in Exodus are a doctrine of Scripture. All doctrines of Scripture are equally authoritative and binding upon us in the sense that they are to be believed and not doubted or denied even though they may not be all of the same importance when viewed from the centre of Scripture: Christ and justification by faith. We acknowledge, however, that when the subject doing the teaching is understood to be the church, then the term 'doctrine' has come to be more closely aligned with the term 'dogma' than with the term 'teaching'. For this reason the church is not usually said to have a 'doctrine' on the ten plagues, or on the dimensions of the ark, even though it may teach precisely what the Scriptures teach on these matters. While the term 'doctrine', from a purely semantic point of view, could, quite properly, be applied also to these teachings of the church, yet, in ecclesiological usage, the term 'doctrine of the church' is reserved for teachings that are more centrally related to the Gospel.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject the attempt to downgrade the lesser teachings of Scripture as unworthy to be called 'doctrines of Scripture' because they are somehow not as important or authoritative as the doctrines that deal with the more central articles of the faith.

#### Dogma

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. The term 'dogma' is related to the Greek words *dokei moi* 'it seems to me', and has come to mean something that is held to be a clear and unimpeachable truth. When the church 'dogmatizes' or declares a position to be dogmatically established it means that it recognizes this position to be unassailably established. A 'dogma' is a declaration made by a synod or council of the church. Many had the false view that decisions of synod were guided by the Holy Spirit and therefore could not err. With Luther we declare that synods can err and have erred. In the Lutheran Church the term 'dogma' means that the church recognizes something to be a clear and important truth taught in

Scripture. The Roman Catholic Church dogmatizes on matters that are not taught in Scripture. This means that they set forth a position to be believed and accepted on the authority of the church itself. This is quite contrary to the Lutheran Confessions. We believe that the only authority for dogmas of the church is the clear teaching of the Scriptures. The fact that the church may dogmatize on a certain truth does not give to that teaching any greater authority than any other teaching of Scripture on which the church has not dogmatized. It says merely that the church recognizes this particular truth as being clearly taught as an important doctrine of Scripture.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn any understanding of the dogmas of the church that would require us to recognize dogmas as being more authoritative than the other teachings of Scripture, so that, while people may feel free to reject other teachings of Scripture, yet they may not set aside or reject those upon which the church has dogmatized. This sets the church above Scripture.

#### Articles of Faith

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. The term 'articles of faith' can mean one or both of two things among us. First the term denotes those teachings of Scripture which form an important part of the Christian faith (*fides quae creditur*), or body of Christian doctrine. Secondly the term 'article of faith' denotes such a teaching as can be accepted only by faith (*fides qua creditur*) and not on the basis of empirical investigation. Thus the real presence of Christ's body in the Lord's Supper is an article of faith in both of these senses: it both is an important part of the Christian faith as doctrine, and can be accepted only by faith in God's Word and not by empirical investigation. We assert that all the articles of faith in the first sense must be those revealed in Scripture, they must relate to the salvation of man and be intimately connected with the other doctrines of the Christian faith.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We warn against confusion between the two meanings of the expression 'articles of faith'. When a particular truth is an article of faith in the sense that it is an important part of our Christian faith or beliefs, this does not mean that it is necessarily an article of faith also in the sense that it is not open to empirical investigation. Example: Those fall into this error who assert the absurd position that because the creation of all creatures by God is an article of faith, therefore it is detrimental to this faith when Christian men of science demonstrate the scientific impossibility of evolution, and so, by implication, establish a special creation as the only possible alternative. This, they say would 'prove' creation so that it could no longer be an article of faith. In this way they say our faith in creation is destroyed. This is absurd.

#### Theology and Theologies

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We understand the term 'theology' to designate the study that treats of God, his nature, qualities, works, and relations with man and the universe. We therefore affirm that, as there is only one true God, so there can be only one true theology, namely that which is consistent with the full revelation of God in Scripture. All deviations from this one true theology must be considered to be false theologies, or theologies of error. The

plural form 'theologies', then, of necessity, has a bad connotation among us implying error and false teaching.

## NEGATIVE

1. We reject as dangerous and misleading the view that theology is the theologian's task of contextualizing the Gospel. Especially false and dangerous is the view that the Gospel is never found in the New Testament as Gospel, but only contextualized and expressed in various different theologies, so that it becomes the theologian's task today to extricate the Gospel from the various theologies in which it was contextualized in the New Testament and to express it in our own theology of today.
2. We reject as unwarranted and confusing the use of the plural form 'theologies' to express the simple application of the Gospel in every age or society. To conclude that, because the different New Testament writers had different audiences, therefore they had different theologies is quite misleading, and invites legitimate suspicions of false and objectionable presuppositions.
3. It is a serious mistake to view the Scriptures as historically conditioned human writings that contain conflicting traditions and diverse theologies, from which no absolutely reliable or permanently valid doctrine can be derived without radical reinterpretation and careful extrication of the Gospel from the diverse and sometimes contradictory theologies in which it has been absorbed in the New Testament. The false and lying, position of 'reconciled diversity' (or full church fellowship across confessional boundaries, while allowing confessional differences to remain) is thought to be justified on the basis of this fallacious assumption of diverse theologies in the New Testament. This we totally reject.

## Article 27

### PROCEDURES RELATING TO THE FORMULATION AND CONFESSION OF DOCTRINE

#### Formulating Doctrine

Dogmatics is not the art of systematically deriving doctrines from some central theological principle such as 'Christ' or 'the gospel' or 'the sovereignty of God'. Dogmatics may indeed arrange doctrines in a systematic way, taking into account their relationship with each other. But the Lutheran approach to dogmatics is simply to bring together all the teaching of the Scriptures on various subjects and to arrange them systematically. Melancthon, who wrote the first Lutheran Dogmatics, called his work simply *loci*, which means passages (of Scripture). Texts of Scripture which set out to teach a particular point are the 'seats of doctrine' (*sedes doctrinae*) for that particular doctrine and they must be acknowledged to have pre-eminence over such passages as do not speak so clearly or directly on that specific matter.

## AFFIRMATIVE

1. We assert that the Lutheran confession of *sola scriptura* (Scripture Alone) demands that we derive all teachings and doctrines of the church only from scripture passages.
2. We believe and teach that the doctrines of Scripture or the dogmas of the church maintain their position as truth to be proclaimed by the church, not because they proceed in some way from the centrality of Christ as the core and centre of Scripture,

but because they are set forth in the words of Scripture itself, the Word and revelation of God.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn the practice of deriving doctrines from some central biblical idea or truth, such as 'the gospel' or 'the sovereignty of God', with the assumption that the doctrines thus derived are vested with authority by virtue of their connection with the central authoritative truth or principle rather than from the texts and words of Scripture.
2. We must constantly be on our guard against the Romanising tendency to regard dogmas of the church, which have been solemnly declared by synods or councils of the church, as somehow of greater authority and binding force than the simple teachings of Scripture on which the church has not dogmatized or made any confessional pronouncement.

#### Treating Scripture as Supreme

From time to time theologians have spoken or written in such a way as to imply that only those teachings of Scripture, expressly taught in the confessions of the church, belong to the Gospel or the body of truth essential to the life and unity of the church. Some have affirmed therefore that it is wrong to insist upon clear teachings of Scripture not emphasized by the confessions of the church. Others have pointed out that this is in fact treating the confessions as being above the Scriptures.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We assert that the *sola scriptura* principle maintains its own authority, and is not assisted, or rescued, by the authority of the church. The Confessions are always under, and never over, the Scriptures. The Confessions are not an interpreting authority above the Scriptures.

#### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn any effort to come to the rescue of the Scriptures with the Confessions or dogmas of the church. This is done, for example, when people are prepared to compromise genuine biblical authority or inerrancy by allowing for errors in peripheral areas, but then, when it is found that in practice there is no agreement on what are the limits of 'peripheral matters', the Confessions or dogmas of the church are appealed to in order to keep the corrosive poisons (an errant Scripture) within bounds. This is nothing but placing the Confessions above the Scriptures.

#### Fundamental and Non-Fundamental Articles

From time to time theologians have spoken of fundamental and non-fundamental articles of faith. Some have held that while Christians must agree on all fundamental articles, they are free to disagree on non-fundamental articles. Quenstedt long ago made a threefold distinction between articles of faith, namely: *Primary* fundamental articles are such teachings of Scripture as must be accepted to obtain eternal salvation, or which cannot be ignored or denied without end angering the foundation of the faith or incurring the loss of salvation. *Secondary* fundamental articles are those of which one may be ignorant without injury to the foundation of the faith but which one cannot deny, much less attack. *Non-fundamental* articles of the faith are those that may be unknown, or even denied, without overthrowing the foundation of the faith or losing salvation.

#### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We affirm that there is some value in distinguishing between fundamental and non-fundamental articles of faith.
2. While there may be differences in terminology or definition in this matter we hold that the distinctions of Quenstedt above are valid.

## **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn, however, every suggestion that Christians are free to disagree on non-fundamental articles of the faith or that this distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental articles is to be used as a basis for the practice of church fellowship.
2. We reject and condemn the notion that the distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental articles implies a grading of authority, so that the fundamental articles are more authoritative than the non-fundamental articles, and hence that one can deny or reject non-fundamental articles without rejecting the authority of Scripture. Such a false teaching wrongly assumes that authority in the Scriptures is related to closeness to the Gospel, rather than to the divine authorship of the words of Scripture.

### Doctrines Potentially Church Divisive

There has been some discussion in the church concerning the areas of doctrine in which disagreement is church divisive. It has been quite generally acknowledged that the disagreements that were evident in the doctrine of Scripture were potentially church divisive. Article VII of the *Augsburg Confession* has, naturally, figured prominently in the debate. But this article has also been variously interpreted. Some have maintained that it is sufficient for the unity of the church to have unity merely in the fundamental articles of the Christian faith, or indeed that the unity required is merely unity in the Gospel in the sense of the doctrine of justification. On the one hand, some have required agreement in all the teachings of Scripture as a prerequisite for fellowship; but others, on the other hand, have insisted upon a minimal consensus, so that some are advocating that we should stop insisting upon doctrinal consensus at all as a prerequisite for fellowship, but that we should extend the fellowship of our altars to all Christians who believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour.

The great fallacy of liberalism, which wants to avoid the offence of disunity in the practice of church fellowship, is to assume that somehow we can deal directly with the invisible church of God (the *una sancta* ), which consists of all true Christians. To attempt to practice fellowship with all Christians with whom we are one in Christ Jesus is to assume that we can know who the Christians are. But this is self-deceptive presumption, it is a legalistic judgment of hearts, for God alone knows those who are his own. This means that any attempt to practise fellowship on the basis of our estimation of who are Christians is totally subjective. The only way to practise church fellowship with evangelical objectivity is to base our practise upon the pure marks of the church.

## **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We believe that there is a spiritual unity of faith between all true believers in Christ, no matter to which outward church or denomination they may belong.
2. We believe and teach, however, that according to God's Word only God knows with certainty who are his own (2 Timothy 2:19; cf. Romans 11:4). The communion of saints ( *una sancta* ) or the whole number of believers is therefore invisible to men.

3. We believe, teach and confess that church fellowship (pulpit and altar fellowship) is not to be confused with the inward unity that we have with all believers in Christ, but it is an external expression of unity.
4. Church fellowship, therefore, cannot be based upon human judgments or estimates of anyone's internal spiritual condition of faith or love etc., which are beyond human inspection, so that such estimates involve purely subjective judgments. Church fellowship, as an external witness of unity, must be based upon objective criteria, assessing conditions that are externally evident and available to us. We believe, teach and confess that the objective and external criteria for the practice of church fellowship are the pure marks of the church, the pure Word and Sacraments, upon which foundation the church of God has been built (Ephesians 2:20; 2 Timothy 2:19).
5. We believe it to be obvious that Article VII of the *Augsburg Confession* , which deals with the true unity of the church, studiously avoids the subjective language of speaking about 'Christians ' or 'all who believe in Jesus as their Saviour', but it wisely and properly affirms the objective criteria of the pure marks of the church when it says:

*For this is enough for the true unity of the Christian church) that the Gospel be preached unanimously according to its pure understanding and the Sacraments be distributed in conformity with the divine Word...*

6. We assert that the central characteristic of a truly Lutheran approach to the practice of church fellowship is rooted in, and begins with, the important concept of the *pure marks of the church* , meaning the pure teaching of the Gospel and the rightly administered Sacraments as shown in Article VII of the *Augsburg Confession* .
7. While we do not wish to debate here the precise meaning of the term 'gospel' in *Augsburg Confession* , VII, yet we need to assert that it must be seen at least to involve not just some 'mini-gospel' or short slogan that 'Jesus is Lord and Saviour', but all the articles of faith with justification in Christ as their centre. The Law is certainly presupposed by the true Gospel of Christ crucified.
8. We believe that, for the establishment and preservation of church fellowship (the unity of the church), it is necessary to have unity and agreement on all those articles of faith or doctrines of Scripture that constitute and uphold the material and formal principles - both the substance and source of our faith. Whatever undermines one, undermines both.
9. Unity in the pure marks of the church certainly means unity and agreement in all the teachings of Scripture that relate to the meaning of the Gospel, of Christ and his work, for this is the very substance and centre of the Christian faith (the material principle).
10. Unity in the pure marks of the church also certainly means unity and agreement in the doctrine of Scripture, which involves the only source and authority by which the Gospel can be known to us today (the formal principle).
11. We assert that, when there is disagreement concerning purely earthly matters of history, geography or scientific interest that are recorded in the Scriptures, then such disagreement on these matters, in itself, would not be divisive of church fellowship, inasmuch as they do not belong to the foundation of the faith and therefore the marks of the church. For example, Scripture records also some false statements and opinions of various people (cf. Cain, and Job's comforters). However, when matters are taught in the Scriptures for our acceptance, then one cannot refuse to accept and believe

them without being in a state of rebellion against, or unbelief towards, the authority of Scripture itself and thereby becoming involved in a rejection of the organic foundation of the faith (the formal principle). Such a state is certainly divisive of church fellowship.

12. In addition, it needs to be emphasized that the Christian Gospel is not just a presentation of ancient opinions or philosophies, but it is very decidedly the Gospel of the incarnation of our God into history and geography in our time and space upon this earth. For this reason the historical, geographical and scientific details taught in Scripture are an integral part of the full Gospel of God becoming flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:14) for our salvation. Because of this they belong also to the dogmatic foundation of the faith. The Gospel is attacked when the historical and peripheral details referring to specific times, places, and persons are denied or stripped away. That may be a Gnostic gospel, but it is not the true Christian Gospel of the incarnate Christ. For this reason Jesus himself said: 'If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things' (John 3:8-13).

## NEGATIVE

1. We reject and condemn every view of the church that would confine the true children of God to one particular visible church organization.
2. We reject and condemn, as arrogant presumption, the notion that men can perceive Christian faith in the hearts of others, so that they are reliably able to say who is a Christian and who is not.
3. We reject and condemn every confusion of church fellowship with the fellowship that all true believers have in Christ, as if somehow, by our practice of church fellowship, we are able to make the invisible church of God visible already here on earth.
4. We reject and condemn, therefore, as arrogant presumption and confusion, every suggestion that the basis for the practice of church fellowship, as an external expression of unity, can be the same as the basis of our unity with all believers in Christ, which is a spiritual unity of faith. Such presumption and confusion is displayed, for example, when- ever people attempt to delineate or define the limits of their church fellowship by subjective judgments or estimates of who is a 'Christian' or a 'believer in Christ'. We reject as a failure to perceive the nature of God's Word, every complaint that to insist upon the pure marks of the Word and Sacraments as that which determines the limits of our church fellowship is cold, dead formalism, while to be guided by 'faith in Christ' or 'Christianity' and 'love' in the practice of our church fellowship displays a much warmer, living and vibrant spirituality.
5. We deplore the failure of so many to see that Article VII of the *Augsburg Confession* refers not to judgments of who is, or is not, a Christian, but to the *pure marks of the church* in Word and Sacraments as being the basis of external unity in the church.
6. We reject and condemn the notion that, if we must indeed insist upon the 'marks of the church' rather than 'the presence of faith' as the basis of the practice of church fellowship, then we have no right to demand the pure marks in the Lutheran sense. We reject and repudiate every suggestion that 'the Lutheran faith' is anything other - more or less - than the true Christian faith revealed in Scripture. We reject also the suggestion that Baptism may serve as a sufficiently objective mark of the church to become the basis of our practice of church fellowship, so that we may receive all who have been baptized into Christ at our altars.

7. We reject, as contrary to Scripture (especially Romans 16:17-18) and to Article VII of the *Augsburg Confession*, the notion of modern ecumenism that some minimal confession of Jesus as Lord and Saviour should be an adequate basis for the practice of church fellowship.
8. We reject and condemn as Gnostic, pagan, and anti-Christian every attempt to belittle the importance of the historical, geographical, and other earthly and physical details that are set forth for our acceptance in Scripture, as if we could question these matters with impunity without endangering our faith or fellowship, since they are not related to the Gospel. This is, in essence, a rejection of the Gospel of the incarnation and a repudiation of the authority of Scripture. It is rebellion both against the dogmatic and the organic foundation of the faith (the material and the formal principles).

## Article 28

### HIGHER CRITICISM

Higher critical views are widely taught to theological students in seminaries today. The view is often presented that higher criticism is simply a useful and neutral tool of bible study. The view is often presented that there is a safe middle path between the faith of historic Christianity in the truthfulness of the Scriptures and the very radical forms of higher criticism. Increasingly its assumptions are becoming evident in materials for study prepared for lay people.

When particular materials are used for bible study, much depends on the attitude of the study leader to the material. However, it is clear that higher critical materials have repeatedly been used uncritically or with approval within the Lutheran Church of Australia, and in cases where real objections to the approach are not presented.

In its blatant forms higher criticism takes the books of the Bible to be no different from any other near-Eastern literature of those times. Biblical writers were allegedly limited by the world view of the writers of the time. It is alleged that if there were differences between what is supposed to have happened then and what happens now, what Scripture reports was just not factual. It has to be brought 'up to date' in any interpretation for today. There is much discussion of myths and literary devices. An alleged distinction between *Historie* and *Geschichte* is made to justify the view that we may regard sections of the Scriptures in the Old Testament as non-factual. It is alleged that the writers of the Bible were simply bearing witness to their own views about God. It is alleged that the same sorts of mistakes occur in the Scriptures as in other writers of those times.

According to higher criticism in its radical forms there is no such thing as direct prophecy. If Isaiah spoke explicitly about Cyrus, for example, he did not speak in prophecy, but after the event. Consequently, Isaiah could not have written the parts of Isaiah attributed to him before the time of Cyrus. It is assumed that Isaiah chapters 40-66 were by other writers called 'deutero-Isaiah' and 'trito-Isaiah', during and after the Babylonian exile. It is alleged that the suffering servant of Isaiah 53 could not refer to the Messiah. Instead, he stood for faithful Israel at the time of the exile. The promised son of a 'virgin' in Isaiah 7:14 was also not a prophecy about Jesus, though Matthew 1:23 says it was. It is alleged that the passage simply meant that the birth of a baby to a young woman of that time was a symbol of the writer's hope that the current war against Judah by Syria and the Northern Kingdom would soon end.

Radical higher critics assume that miracles do not now happen, and did not happen in biblical times. When miracles or the appearances of angels are mentioned, the radical higher



critic assumes that he is dealing with legends that grew in the telling. Radical higher critics of the New Testament assume that Jesus did not really do miracles either. They say that the early church attributed miracles to Jesus.

Radical higher critics even extend rejection of miracles to Jesus' resurrection and reports of the empty tomb. 'Resurrection' is reinterpreted as the idea that early Christians drew new life, so to speak, from the teachings of Jesus. Radical higher critics repeatedly assume that what is reported in the Scriptures as having happened did not in fact happen (See *Theological Statement, and Theological Opinions* , B1, par. 2). Lot's wife's becoming a pillar of salt is said to be a myth. Stories were allegedly changed by editors. It is alleged that Esau did not really bargain for Jacob's lentils at all. It is alleged that the story of Jacob's dream did not develop until Bethel became an important place of worship during the time of Jeroboam. It is alleged that Jacob did not really wrestle with God, but the story simply reflects the struggles of wandering tribes, and it is supposed that it is somehow linked with old legends of the struggle of a man with a river-demon. Its main point is alleged to have been that God's blessing can only be gained through a struggle! It is alleged that Genesis 49 does not really give the blessing by Jacob of his twelve sons, but is a reworking of old tribal sayings as part of a collection called 'J'. It is alleged that Jacob's wives did not really explain the naming of their children as it is reported in Genesis. Myths are sometimes defined as forms of poetry that proclaim truths.

Radical higher criticism often has an inadequate understanding of inherited guilt, and of the pre-existence of the Son of God and his role in creation. Ethics is often regarded as no more than the best insights of the day.

The JEDP source hypothesis assumes that the first five books of the Old Testament were not written in their present form by Moses about 1400 B.C., in spite of the claims within these very books of Scripture (See Exodus 12:1-20; 25:1-31:18; 35:1-40:38). Various theories try to distinguish separate sources J, E, D, and P, which were allegedly compiled crudely by a redactor or editor from these 'sources' during or after the exile of the Jews in Babylon about 560 B.C. These sources are allegedly based on different names for God (such as 'Lord' [ *Yahweh* ], and 'God' [ *Elohim* ]), alleged repetition of events, alleged mistakes in times, and criteria such as differences of style. It is assumed that there are contradictory creation accounts in Genesis 1 and 2 based on different sources.

In spite of clear statements in Daniel itself, it is alleged that Daniel was written only after the defilement of the temple by Antiochus Epiphanes in 167 B.C. It is assumed that the events reported in the book of Jonah were not factual. What Jesus says about Isaiah, Daniel, and Jonah is passed over. The JEDP source hypothesis assumes that much of the Old Testament's description of its chronology is wrong. It assumes, for example, that the law was not given at Sinai, but grew up gradually from a 'Mosaic germ'. It is assumed that there was no worship of only one God in Israel until about 750 B.C., and that Moses could not have written in Hebrew. (In Genesis 31:44-54 it is said that Jacob already was a speaker of Hebrew).

The JEDP source hypothesis assumes that Moses could not have written Deuteronomy (D), and that Deuteronomy was written after the prophets (but see Deuteronomy 1:1-3; 4:44-46; 5:1; 29:1; 31:9, 24-26).

The JEDP source hypothesis assumes that very few worship practices recorded in the Pentateuch actually existed before the reigns of Saul and David, and that the details of the tabernacle worship and sacrifices were in fact not written down until a priestly writer (P) did so at the time of Ezra. It was allegedly the impression given by priests that God spoke to individuals in ancient times.

One of the chief supports for the hypothesis is an interpretation of Exodus 6:3 to mean that before Moses the actual word for 'Lord' was not known in Israel until that time.

The so-called 'quest for the historical Jesus' has led to profound scepticism about the historical reliability of much of what is said in the New Testament. Much of the New Testament is alleged to be the construction of the early church. It is suggested that the early Christians presented Jesus differently from how he was in fact. The New Testament is alleged to be merely witness to Jesus, rather than an unfolding of what is already there in Jesus' self-witness, stamped with Jesus' own authority.

### **AFFIRMATIVE**

1. We affirm that many passages in the Pentateuch itself report that Moses himself wrote down significant parts of the sacred record, and many other Old Testament statements, and statements by Jesus and other writers of the New Testament confirm this.
2. We affirm that there is no external evidence for the JEDP source hypothesis.
3. We affirm that the alleged reasons behind the use of different names for God by the JEDP hypothesis obscure the real reasons behind the choice of different names for God, as the various names for God had different meanings and associations that made them appropriate for certain contexts. 'Lord' ( *Yahweh* ) tends to be used when the ethical concept of God is in focus, when the simple faith of a multitude, or the ardour of the prophetic spirit, is expressed, when the picture of God that is conveyed is precise, and when God's glorious presence is described. 'Lord' is particularly used when God's relationship with his people is in focus. 'God' ( *Elohim* ) tends to be used of him as the source of life, when the picture of God is general, or a reference is more ordinary. 'God' is generally the term in relation to someone who is not a member of his chosen people, and so on.
4. What each alleged 'document' needs to complete it and make it intelligible is what has been cut away by the critics and assigned to other sources.
5. We affirm that what Exodus 6:3 means is that previously God had revealed himself to the patriarchs by such names as 'the Almighty God', but they did not experience him in his capacity of 'Lord' ( *Yahweh* ). The name 'Lord' is particularly appropriate to the fulfilment of the promises made to the patriarchs.
6. We affirm that many supposed differences in style can simply be accounted for by subtle differences in meaning and aspects like rhythm and emphasis.

### **NEGATIVE**

1. We reject and condemn the JEDP source hypothesis as unscholarly and unscientific, and because it discourages careful research. We reject its many arbitrary fallacies, imprecisions, inconsistencies, anomalies, logical blunders, and circular argumentations and repeated failures to look carefully at the evidence. We reject therefore, as totally naive, the suggestion that the JEDP source hypothesis and similar unfounded higher critical theories may be used by scholars, either as neutral tools, or in spite of the fact that they are not accepted in their totality.
2. We reject and condemn the assumption that there cannot be similar events, but only divergent accounts of the same event.

3. We reject the criterion of theological differences between sources. In fact, none of the criteria are valid, and critics ought to have rejected the conclusions that they have based on invalid criteria.
4. We reject and condemn the so-called 'search for the historical Jesus' as radical unbelief in the authority of Scripture.
5. We reject and condemn the destructive effects of form criticism in the New Testament as conflicting with the inspiration of the Scriptures by the Holy Spirit, and with their full reliability.
6. We reject and condemn the uncritical use of bible study materials that propound higher critical unbelief, and that consequently fail to encourage people to rely implicitly on all that is written in God's Word. We also reject the approving use of them, and any use of them that fails to warn of the inherent dangers and errors.

### ***Glossary***

*Adoptionist (or adoptionist)*: a view of Jesus Christ as if he had not been the Son of God from eternity, but as if he had been merely a human being gifted or inspired with divine powers, different from prophets of old only in degree. Some hold that God adopted Jesus as a 'son' at his ascension.

*Apostolicity*: the fact that a book of the New Testament was written by one of the apostles or in association with one. The apostles were eye-witnesses of Jesus' words, works, and especially of his resurrection.

*Augsburg Confession*: a Lutheran confession of faith written mainly by Melanchthon, which was presented at Augsburg in 1530. The first 21 articles summarise the essential Lutheran doctrines and the remaining seven articles deal with abuses that called for correction.

*Canon*: a Greek word meaning 'measuring rod'. The canon of Scripture is the accepted list of the books that belong in the Bible. A canonical book of Scripture is an authoritative and therefore accepted book.

*Capernaïtic*: referring to a view of eating in the Lord's Supper as if Christ's body could be perceived there by the senses of sight, taste, touch etc., or as if the eating of Christ's body occurred in a natural way similar to the eating of the bread, or as if the eating of Christ's body could be understood by reason. The word comes from the objections of the Jews at Capernaum (cf. John 6:52).

*Consensus Statement*: a Consensus Statement on Holy Scripture was adopted at the Croydon General Synod of the LCA in 1987. It can be found in *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the Lutheran Church of Australia*, Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, revised third edition, 1989, pages B9-B11.

*Contextualise*: place a document in the setting in which it was written, to establish its proper meaning.

*Diaconate*: the clerical office of deacon. From about the second century deacons are the rank of Christian ministry below presbyters and bishops. Deacons were basically assistants to the bishop in the early church.

*Dialectic*: a method of dealing with apparent contradictions. It was a standard approach in the schoolmen of the Middle Ages like Abelard and Thomas Aquinas to say in what respects and

for what reasons a doctrinal statement was unacceptable, and then in what respects and for what reasons it was acceptable. It is a practice of some modern theologians to state arguments on both sides without endeavouring to reach a conclusion.

*Dichotomy*: the theory (opposed to trichotomy), that man is made up of two elements, body and soul.

*Didache*, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles: an early Christian manual on morals and church practices, dated variously from 60 AD to about 180 AD.

*Docetism*: a tendency in the early church to consider the humanity and the sufferings of Jesus on earth as apparent rather than real.

*Empirical*: stated with reference to this real world. Empirical statements are open to proof and disproof because the evidence for them can be tested. Empirical statements are often contrasted with statements that are necessarily true, even without reference to the real world (like 'two and two are four'), and with subjective statements about attitudes and emotions, which people other than the speaker cannot disprove even if they doubt them.

*Enthusiasts*: in a theological sense, people who hold that the Holy Spirit works directly in people's hearts without the Gospel or the Sacraments as a means of grace.

*Equivocation*: the use of ambiguous words to conceal the truth.

*Exegesis*: the explanation of passages of the Bible.

*Existential*: referring to a movement in 20th century philosophy that emphasises what is subjective, and what involves the active participation of the will, rather than what is objective and rational. In existentialism man is defined as the sum total of his deeds. The names most associated with existentialism are Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Sartre.

*Formula of Concord*: the last of the Lutheran confessions of faith, completed in 1577. It deals with topics in current controversy, including synergism, the Law and the Gospel, the divine and human natures in Christ, the Lord's Supper, and Election. There is a shorter version, the Epitome, and a longer version, the Thorough Declaration.

*Genres*: kinds of writing, including, besides historic narratives, poems, legends, myths, and other accounts that were allegedly expected to be understood differently from their historical form.

*Geschichte*: the German word for 'history'. When in theology it is contrasted with 'Historie', 'Geschichte' is 'the history that happened as such, with its own particular structure of reality', and 'Historie' is 'methodical finding out about past events and reporting on them'. People should be aware that many modern theologians do not regard many narratives in the Scriptures as truthfully relating exactly what happened. They are often considered to be literary genres with different purposes.

*Heretic*: a person who persistently denies a Christian doctrine.

*Holiness bodies*: denominations under various names that have a legalistic approach to the Bible, discount original sin, stress both free will, and teach that Christians can in this life become entirely holy instantaneously. All of them also accept a literal reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years before the end of the world.

*Holistic*: the same as 'wholistic', 'as a whole', 'in full'.

*Incarnate*: having been made flesh, or having become human.

*Ingressive aorist*: a special use of what is often the Greek past tense that emphasises the beginning of an action. 'He believed' in an ingressive sense means 'He began to believe', or 'He came to faith'.

*Kenoticism*: a belief that misunderstands 'emptied himself in Philippians 2:7 in the sense that, when the Son of God became man, he abandoned his divine power, knowledge, and rule over all things, or that the Son of God restrained his divine activity in such a way as to allow a limited and genuinely human consciousness in Jesus. Kenoticists therefore also hold that when Jesus was exalted he received divine attributes as the Son of God.

*Liberation theology*: a distortion of the Gospel in the direction of freedoms for humanity on this earth, by tearing down oppressive institutional structures. Its main features are Marxism, nationalism, opposition to the USA, revolution, and concern with central American and South American problems such as hunger, poverty, lack of education, disease, and political injustice.

*Marks of the Church*: the means of grace, (the Gospel and the Sacraments). The one true church cannot be seen as it really is, but wherever the Gospel and the Sacraments are used rightly, God will, according to his promise, cause them to be effective, and so there we can expect to find true believers. We can tell where the true church is present by these 'visible marks'.

*Marks of unionism*: definitions of aspects of joint worship and church work that fail to confess the full truth of God's Word.

*Nephesh*: a Hebrew word meaning 'soul', 'living being', and 'life' (in distinction from spiritual life and eternal life).

*Office of the Keys*: the authority that Christ has given to his church on earth to forgive and retain sins.

*Pietism*: a movement of the late 17th and 18th centuries that was critical of orthodoxy. It opposed institutionalism, dogmatism, and polemics. Some of its good features were interest in mission and in social welfare. Its erroneous features included a legalistic over-emphasis on sanctification, and on feelings and on inner experience. It had a low regard for correct doctrine and for the means of grace, and misunderstood orthodoxy's concerns in this regard. It had false concepts of spirit and letter, and flesh.

*P ostulate*: demand, claim, or take for granted without proof.

*P ower of the keys*: the authority all Christians have to forgive and retain sins.

*Propitiatory*: obtaining forgiveness for sinners. The Greek word for 'propitiatory' translated the Hebrew word for the 'mercy seat' or the 'atonement cover' (the lid of the Ark of the Covenant), on which the high priest sprinkled holy blood to remove guilt.

*Quenstedt*: Johann Andreas Quenstedt (1617-1685), professor of theology at Wittenberg, a champion of Lutheran orthodox theology.

*Redactor*: an editor. People who reject the Mosaic authorship of Deuteronomy and hold that the first five books of the Bible are not Mosaic, but were put together at or after the time of the Babylonian exile say that the alleged sources J, E, D, and P, which began to circulate later, were clumsily edited in the form in which we now have them by an unknown 'redactor'.

*Schwaerme r ei*: the German word for theological 'enthusiasm', the belief that the Holy Spirit works directly in men's hearts without the Word or Sacraments as means.

*Septuagint*: a Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament completed over a hundred years before the time of Christ. Its text differs considerably from the Hebrew at some points. The New Testament often quotes the Old Testament in this form. The Septuagint also contains apocryphal books of the Old Testament.

*Situational Ethics*: ethics without absolutes. Whether something is right or wrong depends on the particular situation or context, which might be the reason why something considered wrong might be quite justified.

*Smalcald Articles*: a Lutheran confessional writing drawn up in 1537 by Luther. They include criticisms of the mass, purgatory, the papacy, the invocation of saints, and monasticism, and also deal with issues that divided the Protestants, such as the Lord's Supper.

*Suffragan bishops*: an assistant bishop appointed to help the bishop of a diocese.

*Syncretistic*: unionistic; attempting to combine irreconcilable doctrinal elements into a false union.

*Synecdoche*: a figure of speech which expresses the whole by referring to a part, like 'hands' for 'employees' or 'wheels' for 'motor car'. A person who points to a bottle and says 'this is the sauce' is using a synecdoche.

*Synergism*: the error of introducing the co-operating will of man into the doctrine of conversion alongside the work of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel. The error is dealt with in the Formula of Concord, Articles I and II.

*Theses of Agreement*: a series of doctrinal statements prepared by joint committees of the UELCA and the ELCA in Australia. They were adopted by the churches separately in 1956 and 1959, and formed the doctrinal basis of the Lutheran Church of Australia in 1966. They can be found in Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions of the Lutheran Church of Australia, Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, revised third edition, 1989, A1-23.

*Traducianism*: the theory that the human soul is not created by God at conception, but transmitted by the parents to the children.

*Trichotomy* : the view that a human being consists of three elements, soul, body, and spirit. Neither trichotomy nor dichotomy are clearly established in Scripture. In Thessalonians 5:23 'and soul and body' may also be translated 'both soul and body'.

*Universalism*: the false notion that ultimately all will be saved, including those who in this life have had no faith in Jesus Christ.

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