

Confession of Faith Professed and Practiced by All True Lutherans

I. In General

The Bible

We recognize and accept, with our whole heart and without any reservations of whatever kind, the canonical books of the Old and the New Testaments as the Word given by inspiration of God.

The Symbols

We accept the Lutheran Confessions, as contained in the Book of Concord of 1580, as a correct exposition of the Word of God regarding all the doctrines discussed therein.

The Brief Statement

We accept the Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod (adopted in 1932 and reaffirmed in 1947) as a correct presentation of the teaching of Holy Writ on all the questions therein discussed.

Antithesis

We do not accept the *Doctrinal Declaration* of the American Lutheran Church, as presented in 1938, nor the *Doctrinal Affirmation*, as presented in 1944, nor, the so-called *Common Confession*, adopted by the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod by a majority vote in 1950. In all these cases, as in that of the Intersynodical Chicago Theses, submitted to the Missouri Synod convention in 1929 and not accepted, we find that there are clear reasons, found in and based on Scripture, which compel us to reject these documents as such and to adhere wholeheartedly to the confessions named in the three opening paragraphs.

With regard to the *Common Confession*, in particular, we declare that it has not accomplished its purpose of being clear, concise, and unequivocal in composing the differences which have separated the synods concerned for many decades. The *Common Confession* is incomplete, inadequate, and at times faulty in its teaching, and it lacks throughout the vigor of the Brief Statement.

II. Twelve Points

More specifically and offering the main reasons for forming a dissenting group, we take the following stand with regard to the doctrinal controversies in the Lutheran church bodies of America, including the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod.

1. That the validity of a scriptural engagement is determined by clear texts of Holy Writ which do not pertain merely to the Ceremonial Law, but are in force at all times, e. g., Genesis 24:56-58; Genesis 29:21; Deuteronomy 22:23-26; Matthew 1:20, etc., and that the teaching in the exposition of our *Small Catechism* is definitely Scriptural. A Scriptural engagement initiates holy marriage and is not a mere vestibule.
2. That Romans 16:17-18 is, in both the original and in translations commonly in use, a clear passage, condemning all fraternizing in the religious field where there is no doctrinal unity, 1 Corinthians 1:10; Galatians 5:9, without restriction or modification as to the degree of aberration in doctrine. The warning of the passage applies not only to non-Christians or to non Lutherans, but to persistent adherents of aberrations within Lutheran bodies also.
3. That 'selective fellowship,' as advocated and practiced in certain parts of Lutheran bodies in America, even if not intentionally unionistic, is bound to involve those who practice it in a relation contrary to the fellowship which, according to the will of God, is to obtain between those who wish to be regarded as brethren; it is thus contrary to the law of love, which requires primary allegiance to those with whom honest confessors of the full truth are united in doctrinal fellowship.
4. That the National Lutheran Council and the National Council of Christian Churches are essentially unionistic church bodies with distinctive marks and functions of such organizations, also that the Lutheran World Federation and all other organizations of this type are contrary to Scripture, chiefly because of the unionistic nature of their Eucharistic services and other endeavors which are not in the field of externals.
5. That the phrase of Holy Writ, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," 2 Timothy 3:16, and "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning," Romans 15:4, declare not only the doctrinal sections of Holy Writ (specifically those pertaining to the redemption wrought by Christ), but also all other statements, historical accounts, geographical references, and even incidental remarks, to be the inspired truth of God. We hold the definition of our *Small Catechism* to be correct: "'By inspiration of God' means that God the Holy Ghost moved the holy men to write, and put into their minds the very thoughts which they expressed and the very words which they wrote." 2 Peter 1:21.

6. While Holy Writ itself distinguishes between more important and less important recorded facts (I Corinthians 3:3; Hebrews 5:12-6:2), the distinction between so-called fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines, while in agreement with Scripture, has been introduced by theologians, and its abuse has caused much confusion. We dare not give up one statement of the Word. He who teaches that non-fundamental doctrines are not divisive of church fellowship thereby becomes guilty of separatistic teaching. We reject, in addition, the teaching that it is neither necessary nor possible to be agreed in all points of doctrine, or that complete agreement in details of doctrine and practice is not required.

7. To this point we are bound to add another: Since Scripture itself claims the attribute of clarity in all matters pertaining to faith and life (Psalm 119:105; Psalm 19:7-8), it is dangerous and misleading to inject theories pertaining to so-called exegetical difficulties, theological problems, and open questions into any discussion regarding the unassailable truth of the Bible. Most of these difficulties are not within the scope of Holy Writ. On the part of God there is nothing dark in any part of the inspired Volume; it is merely the darkness of our minds, the difficulty of certain words and phrases in the original and a few archeological references which give us trouble; all else pertains to man's perversity. See 2 Peter 3:16; I Corinthians 13:9-12; I Corinthians 2:13-16; Matthew 11:25; 2 Corinthians 4:3. The regular study of Holy Writ by believing Christians will remove most difficulties.

8. While Holy Writ warns against a subjective isolationism that is, schisms and separations which are concerned with outward forms and customs that do not bear in themselves elements of confusion and disruption (I Corinthians 1:10-13; 14:33; 11:18-19), it does not sanction arbitrary modes of behavior which are apt to give offense to brethren (Romans 14:15; I Corinthians 8:9); and the *Formula of Concord* is right (Art. X, especially Nos. 5, 7, 16) when it tells Christians not to identify themselves, also in outward forms, with customs which are associated with the enemies of the truth, specifically also in the matter of vestments and characteristic services. Separation is demanded by God when church fellowship with others, also within the Lutheran group, is equivalent to the condoning of error and the supporting of erroneous teaching (I Timothy 5:20-22; 2 John, 10-11). On such principles the Christian Church was founded and the Lutheran Church established, for the repudiation of error in doctrine and practice is an essential requirement in the case of all true members of the Christian Church.

9. We regard a church organization, such as a synod, a federation of congregations and certain individuals, as supreme and sovereign with reference to its own internal affairs, and its jurisdiction over its officials of every type. But the resolutions of a synod regarding doctrinal matters have validity in its constituent congregations and for its individual members only if such resolutions are in full agreement with the Word of God and do not infringe upon the sovereignty of the individual congregation. Any bureaucratic or hierarchical polity in which congregations or individuals are subjected to man-made rules or to government and direction

of synodical officials cannot so function according to the Word of God. While a church body may, and should, publish its confessions and insist upon the use of orthodox textbooks by its constituents, it transgresses its functions if it attempts to bind on the consciences of its members any resolutions that are not supported by Holy Writ.

10. We recognize and honor the position of parish pastors and other leaders who labor in the Word and doctrine (Galatians 6:6-7; I Timothy 5:17-18; I Thessalonians 5:12-13; Hebrews 13:17), and we acknowledge the fact that the Lord has safeguarded their office (I Corinthians 4:1; I Timothy 5:19; Hebrews 13:7). At the same time we emphasize the position of all Christians as kings and priests before the Lord of the Church (I Peter 2:19; Revelation 1:6), and their right to judge all doctrine (John 10:5; I Corinthians 2:15; I John 4:1), as stressed especially by Luther in various monographs and expository writings (also the matters of regulating church ceremonies, vestments, etc.). When believers form a congregation they jointly exercise the Office of the Keys, forgiving and retaining sins and administering the Sacraments in the name of all, the public exercise of this power being in the hands of the pastor in his divinely instituted office.

11. According to Scripture all officials and pastors, in fact all members of Synod who are aware of the implications of the Chicago Statement of 1945 and of its doctrinal aberrations, also of the false teaching which appeared in the columns of the Lutheran Witness and elsewhere, and did not state their objections or inform their congregations of the growing doctrinal discord in the Missouri Synod, are remiss in their duties and have become guilty of other men's sins (Romans 16:17-19; I Timothy 6:3-5; I Timothy 5:22.).

12. Without our solicitation we find ourselves supported in our objection to the *Common Confession* by the results of searching studies of brethren in our own country and in other countries, the general agreement in the criticism being that the *Common Confession* has weakened and even nullified many parts of the *BRIEF STATEMENT*. To try to uphold them both is equivalent to halting between two opinions. If the *BRIEF STATEMENT*, in all doctrinal teaching, is right, then the *Common Confession* in the corresponding parts is wrong because of its vagueness and omissions. And since repeated efforts to halt the progressive deterioration of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod have brought no results, the time has come when, for the sake of hundreds of troubled consciences, the actual status of affairs must be proclaimed to the whole world, lest we be condemned by the Lord of Truth together with those who persistently teach falsehood.