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Editorial

On Tuesday, July 24, 1973, members of the faculty and executive staff of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, joined in issuing the following statement of protest, confession, and appeal to the members of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The statement was issued in response to charges by delegates assembled at the New Orleans convention of the Synod that members of the faculty hold false doctrine “that cannot be tolerated in the church of God.”

A DECLARATION OF PROTEST AND CONFESSION

In the fear of God and mindful that this may be our final opportunity to speak with one voice we, members of the faculty and staff of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, take courage from our Lord Jesus Christ to protest actions of the New Orleans Convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and to make a confession to our church.

WE PROTEST

We protest the convention’s judgment that we teach false doctrine which “cannot be tolerated in the church of God.” The evidence cited in support of the judgment misrepresents and distorts our teaching. We teach what the Scriptures teach, and it is that teaching which the convention has misrepresented and condemned.

We protest the convention’s violation of the procedures for evangelical discipline clearly outlined in the Synod’s constitution and bylaws. We were accused, tried, and condemned without due process even though the seminary’s Board of Control had already examined us and declared us not guilty of false doctrine.

We protest the convention’s breach of contract in judging and condemning us by a doctrinal standard different from the doctrinal article of the Constitution (Article II), the platform on which all members of the Synod have taken their stand together.

We protest the convention’s violation of the principle of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone) in elevating tradition above Scripture. The convention fettered the Scriptures by requiring members of the Synod to interpret them in accord with a presumed synodical tradition, which the convention defined through the adoption of *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*. Like Luther we stand for an open Bible which we are free to read on its own terms, limited only by our voluntary commitment to the Lutheran Confessions.

We protest the convention’s use of coercive power to establish the true doctrine of the Scriptures. The truth of God cannot be imposed through convention action in adopting doctrinal statements but can only be recognized and confessed by means of the Holy Spirit working faith through the Word of God.

We protest the convention’s unconstitutional act of altering the Synod’s confessional standard by expanding the doctrinal article of the Constitution (Article II) to include doctrinal statements adopted by the Synod and by making such statements binding upon all of the Synod’s members.

WE CONFESS

We confess before God and all to whom these words come that we repent of what we have done to bring God’s judgment upon our church. We ask God and His church for forgiveness.

We confess our longing for peace and unity in the church. We seek to forgive as we have been forgiven and to foster the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We earnestly desire to work in harmony with our brothers and sisters in the Synod and stand ready to enter into discussion with them.

We confess once again our ordination vow. Together with the Synod and every member of the Synod we accept *without reservation*:

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;

All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.

(Article II, Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod)

We confess that we accept no other doctrinal standard as binding on our consciences even though we may have to suffer for our stand.

We confess an open Bible unfettered by any human rules. With Luther we “acknowledge no fixed rules for the interpretation of the Word of God”—whether historical-critical, grammatical-historical, or any other—“since the Word of God, which teaches freedom in all other matters, must not be bound.” (“The Freedom of a Christian,” *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vol. 31, p. 341)

We confess our determination to oppose any teaching which is less than the full Law and Gospel which our Lutheran Confessions affirm to be the doctrine of the Sacred Scriptures.

We confess our resolution to continue to carry out our solemn call to teach the doctrine of the Scriptures and to prepare students for the ministry of Word and Sacrament, as long as God gives us the grace to do so.

AN APPEAL

Our church confronts a crisis. The Gospel is at stake. Our church is in danger of losing its truly Lutheran character and of becoming a sect. In issuing this *Declaration of Protest and Confession* we join with those delegates to the New Orleans Convention who stood together to protest convention actions and to confess the Bible's Gospel. We call upon our brothers and sisters to join in a common movement of protest and confession within the Synod.

We need to stand together in our concern to be truly Lutheran.

We need to stand together in our concern to be the church.

We need to stand together in our concern for a free and open Bible.

We need to stand together in our concern for the Gospel.

THE CHURCH'S ONE FOUNDATION IS JESUS CHRIST HER LORD!