

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

The Role of *A Brief Statement* Since 1932

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A Brief Statement Guidelines and Helps

Apostolic Succession

Homiletics

Theological Observer

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Editorial Comment

Two feature articles in this issue of our journal are devoted to a discussion and review of *A Brief Statement*.

In previous numbers (July, August, September, 1961), Dr. Carl S. Meyer of our faculty provided a helpful survey of the background and setting from which this document emerged 30 years ago.

In a current article the same author calls to mind the role that *A Brief Statement* has played since its adoption in 1932.

This survey suggests that *A Brief Statement* was assigned a position of increasing importance as it grew older. As an indication that it was regarded as having served its immediate purpose satisfactorily, we note that at the time of its adoption and for some years afterward it called forth little or no comment and discussion within our church. But particularly after the first decade of its existence it has increasingly become a center of debate.

Therefore the second article in this issue is presented in the hope that it might serve as guidelines for a careful study of *A Brief Statement* and an evaluation of its place in our church (possibly as a part of the program of pastoral conferences in the coming post-Easter season).

The only fair criterion to apply to an historical document is to determine whether it succeeds in achieving its purpose. Since the authors of *A Brief Statement* were instructed to "formulate theses which, beginning with the *status controversiae*, present the doctrine of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions in the shortest and simplest manner," the only fair question to put to it is: Does it adequately and fairly present the controversial doc-

trines of that era? Obviously it should not be faulted for not mentioning issues and formulations of theological thinking that have come into existence since 1932.

But in view of attempts to enlarge the function of *A Brief Statement* and to assign to it the wider scope of a general, comprehensive, and permanent confession of the doctrines of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Symbols for our day and for times to come, it becomes legitimate and necessary to examine it for answers to questions which it was not intended to give, since they are beyond the purview of its original purpose. It is very important to note that almost all the points raised in our article are based on the assumption that such an enlarged role is proposed for *A Brief Statement*.

It is also for this reason that in the article by far more space is devoted to criticism than to well-deserved commendation. The reader will observe moreover that nowhere in the presentation are the doctrines of *A Brief Statement* declared contrary to the Scriptures or in conflict with the Symbols.

This article is the product of the editorial staff of this journal.

The task of writing it was undertaken with a sense of profound gratitude and filial respect to the authors of *A Brief Statement*, particularly to those among them from whom some members of the staff heard and learned the Word of life as students. Whatever is said, comes from the conviction that we shall always remain learners at the feet of such men as Dr. Francis Pieper, no doubt the chief author of *A Brief Statement*.

A few more introductory comments may be in place.

The article does not purport to be an exhaustive study but calls attention by way of example only to some points and areas that by common consent of the staff deserve serious consideration. Others might have been mentioned.

In the preparation of the article the staff was able to draw on studies and discussions of *A Brief Statement* by the en-

tire faculty. During the past two years a series of meetings was held for the express purpose of hearing and discussing papers prepared by members of the faculty on a selected number of articles of *A Brief Statement*. Those treated in this manner are: Of the Holy Scriptures, Of Creation, Of Man and of Sin, Of Redemption, Of Faith in Christ, Of Conversion, Of Justification, Of the Means of Grace, Of the Church, Of the Election of Grace.