

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

Secularization Theology, Charismatic Renewal, and
Luther's Theology of the Cross

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Editorial ✠

THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS AND UNITY AMONG CHRISTIANS

(ED NOTE: Most readers of this journal know that each member of the faculty that publishes it is currently being interviewed concerning his relationship to the Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and synodically adopted doctrinal statements. The Rev. Dr. Jacob A. O. Preus, president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, appointed a presidential committee to ascertain the facts of the matter so that he can deal with the “repeated complaints” he has received concerning the Scriptural and confessional loyalty of faculty members.

The faculty has issued several statements that present its position on matters that it assumes have disturbed some members of the Synod. In this issue this journal carries the first two statements as a matter of information to the members of the church and as a matter of permanent historical record. It proposes to carry subsequent statements as they are issued.

We also plan to print a series of brief articles by faculty members and others to highlight the evangelical, or Gospel, implications of the issues concerning which we assume the “repeated complaints” have been made. It is our determination to witness a good confession to strengthen each other and to bring encouragement in the Gospel to others. It is our determination to answer all questions in such a way that the Gospel is proclaimed and the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ is magnified.

In this issue we present the first of these “private” statements. This one was prepared by Richard R. Caemmerer, member of this faculty for 30 years and professor of preaching. The theses have been discussed at length by the faculty, but were not presented for adoption. They are, in our judgment, useful to the church both because they provide a unique insight into how a confessional theological faculty must function and because they provide valuable guidance to all who desire to spend their lives working toward the goal of Christian unity and Lutheran doctrinal agreement. HERBERT T. MAYER)

1. We affirm that the Holy Spirit creates and sustains the unity of the church through the Gospel of Jesus Christ as it is shared through the preaching of the pure Word and through the sacraments properly administered. Other efforts to create and sustain the unity of the church, such as prescription, debate, or threat of penalty, do not contribute to the faith and love which are essential to genuine unity.

Note John 17:14-23; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; Gal. 6:1-10; Eph. 4:1-17. Confessions: AC VII (p. 32); Apol. IV, 231-32 (pp. 139 f.), XI, 3 (p. 180); Sm. Art. III, IV (p. 310). (The page references are to *The Book of Concord*, ed. T. G. Tappert et al. [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1959].) Note in AC VII the difference between the translation of the original German and the Latin version. Other references may be found in Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, I (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 313, 316.

2. We affirm the importance of continually working toward harmony in Christian teaching as a contribution to Christian unity and the faith of the people of the church. This process (*concordia*) must avoid setting Christian brothers against each other in such a way that charges of departure from the faith are raised or that helpful communication and discussion are halted.

1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:14-18. The Introduction to the Formula of Concord (pp. 463—64) provides an important historical survey of how this "unity-process" led to the adoption of the Formula.

3. We affirm that our task is to define and relate the Gospel to the church and to the world and to those whom we prepare for ministry. We regret any developments that cause our work toward the church or toward our students to lose its central function of ministry of the Gospel.

1 Cor. 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 5:11-21; 1 Tim. 4; 2 Tim. 2 and 3; Titus 2 and 3. SD Rule and Norm, 15-16 (pp. 506 f.); SD XI, 92-93, 96 (p. 632); SD XII, 39-40 (p. 636).

4. We affirm the Holy Scriptures to be the inspired Word of God and the sole norm of the church's teachings, and the Lutheran Confessions to be the clear exposition of the Gospel.

2 Tim. 3:1-17. Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Article II. AC Preface, 2-4, 8 (p. 25); Epit. Rule and Norm, 1-8 (pp. 465 ff.); SD Rule and Norm, 4-5, 9-10 (pp. 504 f.); SD V, 1 (p. 558). LCMS Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Revision of the Study Document on Revelation, Inspiration, and Inerrancy* (Supplement to Report and Recommendations to 1965 convention, pp. 31—34; note especially par. 15). See the Faculty Statement on "Form and Function of Holy Scripture," this journal, XXXI (1960), 626 ff.

5. We subscribe without reservation to the doctrinal content of the confessions of the church, recognizing with past teachers of the church that the method of arriving at doctrine (for example, use of exegesis, mode of arguments, etc.) may in some instances be improved upon.

The classic statement in the Missouri Synod is that of C. F. W. Walther, cited *in extenso* and with approval by Pieper, *op. cit.*, I, 356—58. Another presentation is by A. W. C. Guebert in this journal, XVIII (1947), 241 ff.

6. We affirm that legalistic or sectarian use of the confessions or of substitutes or supplements for them harms the unity of the church.

AC Concl. after XXI (p. 47); SD Rule and Norm, 2 (p. 503), 12 (p. 506), X, 10 (p. 612). Note the strong words quoted from Luther in Pieper, III, 428—33, on the representative church.

7. We gratefully share our colleagues' varied gifts, expertise, and insights under the Gospel and solicit the good will of the entire church in the fulfilling of our common task. We acknowledge the damage of any failure to nurture the meekness, kindness, and courage necessary for mutually helpful discussion, admonition, and growth and entreat the help of the Holy Spirit to maintain our unity in Him.

1 Cor. 12; Eph. 4:1-6; Phil. 4:4-9; Col. 3:1-16. LC Creed, 42-59 (pp. 416 ff.).

St. Louis, Mo.