

CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY

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

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The Christian-Marxist Dialog: Spurious
or Authentic?

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DOCUMENTATION

Statements Adopted by the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

1. AFFIRMATIONS ON UNITY

Because announcements about criticisms leveled against the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, could lead members of the Synod to doubt the faithfulness of the faculty to its confessional commitment and in order to reassure the members of the Synod concerning the confessional position of the faculty, the undersigned members of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, make this declaration:

1. We affirm with the constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (Article II) and in keeping with our vows of ordination and installation that we accept without reservation the Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice and all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.

2. We affirm with the Augsburg Confession (Article VII) that it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.

3. We affirm with the Formula of Concord (Solid Declaration) that the primary requirement for basic and permanent concord within the church is a summary formula and pattern, unanimously approved, in which the summarized doctrine commonly confessed by the churches of the pure Christian religion is drawn together out of the Word of God; that for us the summary formula and pattern consists of those public and well-known symbols or common confessions which have at all times and in all places been accepted in all the churches of the Augsburg Confession and which are contained in the Book of Concord of 1580; and that we shall neither prepare nor accept a different or a new confession of our faith as the requirement for basic and permanent concord within the church. (Adopted Nov. 3, 1970. 41 professors signed the statement before it was released.)

2. THE GOSPEL, OUR CONFESSION, AND DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS

In the present discussion of the relation of synodically adopted doctrinal statements to the confessional position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, affirms the following:

I. The confessional position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod is stated in Article II of the Synod's constitution. The Synod requires that its members accept with-

out reservation the Scriptures as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice and all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God. The Synod does not have a confessional or a doctrinal position other than or in addition to what is stated in Article II.

II. Doctrinal statements adopted at conventions of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod can serve an important function in the life of the Synod. They reflect how successfully a delegate convention applied the doctrine of the Scriptures and of the Lutheran Confessions to issues and problems of the day. Conventions of the Synod have asked the Synod's members to honor and uphold the doctrinal content of these synodically adopted statements, because they express the conviction of fathers and brothers with whom all members of the Synod are united in their obedience to the Scriptures and the Confessions. The way to honor and uphold these statements is carefully to study them and to determine how well they do in fact apply to contemporary issues the truth of the Gospel drawn from the Scriptures and affirmed in the Lutheran Confessions.

III. Synodically adopted doctrinal statements are not included in the Synod's confessional commitment, which Article II of the synodical constitution confidently entrusts to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions alone. The bold assumption here is that the best and most adequate safeguard of the truthfulness of the Scriptures is a simply confessional reading of them, subordinating their law to their distinctive promise and thus maximizing the benefits of Christ. But there is also a temptation to the contrary, namely, to assume that for the safety of the Scriptures such a confessional reading is not sufficiently trustworthy, indeed that it may even coddle disrespect for them. When that fear prevails, then synodically adopted doctrinal statements are forced into a new role as criteria of confessional and doctrinal fidelity. Such misuse of them is not only unconstitutional but strikes at the heart of the Lutheran confessional principle.

IV. The Lutheran Confessions, including the Ecumenical Creeds, were gifts of God to the church in times of crisis or special need. Under similar circumstances the church may receive the ability to witness to the Gospel in new confessional formulations to meet new needs. For The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod and all other Lutherans such a subsequent confession would have to presuppose and safeguard the doctrine of the Gospel which is confessed in the Lutheran symbols. The adoption of such subsequent confessions would require not merely majority approval at a delegate synod or series of synods but the voluntary and unreserved acceptance by all those for whom it is to function as a confession, that is, every clergyman and teacher, and each congregation in the synod. (Adopted Nov. 24, 1970)