

### 3. SEMINARY ISSUES

#### To Adopt "A Statement"

##### RESOLUTION 3-01

(Joint Resolution of Committees 2 and 3)

Overtures 2-35, 2-36, 3-21—3-23, 3-30—3-46, 3-171—3-176C, 3-191, 3-193A—3-195B, 6-44, 6-62 (CW, pp. 58 to 59, 123—130, 277—278, 282—283)

##### Preamble

The Formula of Concord, in the Lutheran Confessions, mentions Doctor Luther as asserting that "the Word of God is and should remain the sole rule and norm of doctrine, and that no human being's writings dare be placed on a par with it, but that everything be subjected to it." The next paragraph begins: "This, of course, does not mean that other good, useful, and pure books such as interpretations of the Holy Scriptures, refutations of errors, and expositions of doctrinal articles, should be rejected. If they are in accord with the aforementioned pattern of doctrine they are to be accepted and used as helpful expositions and explanations." (FC, SD, Summary, paragraphs 9—10)

Doctor Walther's "Thirteen Theses," which emerged during the Predestinarian Controversy in America, surely fits into this category. The first of these theses appeared in *Der Lutheraner*, 15 January 1880, and the last in the 1 May 1880 issue. The entire 13 were approved one year later by a vast majority at the synodical convention in Fort Wayne, 11—12 May 1881. (Missouri Synod *Proceedings*, 1881, pp. 35—36, 41)

Our Synod has continued to be greatly concerned with doctrine, as past convention resolutions indicate (1950—1971). Also, in order to clarify the status of doctrinal statements, the Synod approved Resolution 5-24, "Status of Synodically Adopted Doctrinal Statements," at the Milwaukee convention, July 1971, which reads:

*Resolved*, That the Synod reaffirm the desirability of the formulation of doctrinal statements which clearly set forth the teachings of the Holy Scriptures and apply them to issues of our day; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod clearly state that such doctrinal formulations are subordinate to the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod distinguish between resolutions concerning doctrine formulated and adopted at a convention and more formal statements of belief which are produced by officially authorized groups, and which are then presented to the congregations and clergy of the Synod for study and discussion, and which are subsequently adopted by a synodical convention; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod reaffirm the resolutions of recent conventions that the Synod "honor and uphold the synodically adopted statements as valid interpretations of Christian doctrine" (1969 *Proceedings*, p. 91); and be it finally

*Resolved*, That in the case of the aforementioned more formal and comprehensive statements of belief that the Synod declare—

- (1) its position that these statements, together with all other formulations of doctrine, derive their authority from the Word of God which they set forth from the Holy Scriptures;

- (2) its insistence that the ministry of the church regard these formulations with special seriousness and that those who disagree with these formulations in part or in whole be held to present their objections to them formally to those officials whom the Synod has given the immediate supervision of their doctrine;

- (3) its conviction that as a result of joint study of the Word of God the Holy Spirit will lead the Synod into all truth, that possible errors in the aforementioned statements will be discovered and corrected, that instances of failure to submit to the clear teaching of the Holy Scriptures will be evangelically dealt with on an individual pastoral basis, and that the Synod can speak with a voice that is Scriptural, Gospel oriented, truly Lutheran, and that we will continue to "walk together" as a true Synod.

Accordingly, the following resolution is herewith submitted.

WHEREAS, *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*, issued by the President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in consultation with the vice-presidents of the Synod, 3 March 1972, addresses itself to the doctrinal issues troubling the church today; and

WHEREAS, *A Statement* presents what the Synod throughout its history has confessed and taught on these issues, as witnessed to by synodical statements, catechetical expositions, and convention resolutions; and

WHEREAS, *A Statement* is, therefore, neither a new standard of orthodoxy nor a document "based on private writings, but on such books as have been composed, approved, and received in the name of the churches which pledge themselves to one doctrine and religion" (FC, SD, Comp. Summary, paragraph 2); and

WHEREAS, The Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations has evaluated *A Statement* as follows:

We find the doctrinal content of *A Statement* to be in accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and to contain nothing contrary to them. We also find the doctrinal content of *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* to be in accord with the doctrinal position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as it has been taught historically and expressed in the official doctrinal statements of the Synod [Adopted 3 November 1972];

and



The patient ones, not shouting but quietly awaiting their turn.

WHEREAS, *A Statement*, in its entirety, has been presented to the congregations and clergy of the Synod, and during the past 16 months has been studied and discussed throughout the church, and has been approved by various synodical boards (Board of Control, Springfield; Board for Higher Education) and congregations; and

WHEREAS, The Lutheran church in the past, when confronted with doctrinal controversy and crisis, has accepted expressions of belief which are in agreement with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, e. g., the *Thirteen Theses of Doctor Walther*, 1881; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod declare *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*, in all its parts, to be Scriptural and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions, and therefore a formulation which derives its authority from the Word of God and which expresses the Synod's position on current doctrinal issues; and be it further

*Resolved*, That The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod declare *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* to be a "more formal and comprehensive statement of belief" in the sense of Resolution 5-24 of the 1971 Milwaukee convention, and that the Synod further declare that *A Statement* shall hold the status defined in said resolution (Preamble, above).

#### Action: Adopted (10).

(This resolution was discussed in Session 8. When the automatic call for the question was put after 30 minutes it failed to carry by the necessary two-thirds vote. A motion to extend the time of the session also failed. In Session 10 the resolution was taken up again. A motion that this matter and similar resolutions be referred to the Council of Presidents was declined, as well as an amendment concerning the use of *A Statement*. Finally the convention resolved to close debate by a vote of 580 to 429, a clear majority of the registered voting delegates under a special rule adopted in Session 9. The assembly by a vote of 579 to 386 upheld the ruling of the chair with respect to the amended standing rules of the convention. The resolution was then adopted by a vote of 562 to 455. A demonstration of protest followed. See Minutes for Sessions 8 and 10.)

### To Change Bylaws of the "Handbook" as Recommended by the Special Task Force on Accreditation

#### RESOLUTION 3-02

Reports 3-01D, 4-04, V, I; Overtures 3-81A—D, 3-83, 3-93, 3-94, 3-96—3-100; Referred Resolutions 5-47, 5-92, 6-01 (CW, pp. 107—117, 141—145, 172, 424—426)

WHEREAS, The Special Task Force on Accreditation has carefully studied the synodical Bylaws in an effort to protect the interests of the Synod and to meet the concerns of the American Association of Theological Schools; and

WHEREAS, The *Handbook* changes recommended by the Special Task Force on Accreditation protect the rights and interests of the Synod and meet its needs; and

WHEREAS, Carefully spelled out procedures are necessary in cases in which a faculty member is charged

with offenses which may result in dismissal or termination of tenure under present *Handbook* Section 6.77; and

WHEREAS, The procedures spelled out under proposed *Handbook* Section 6.77, Removal from Office, provide protection to the Synod, to faculty members, and to complainants; and

WHEREAS, The granting of tenure is generally accepted in educational circles, and the procedures recommended by the Special Task Force on Accreditation in proposed *Handbook* Section 6.54 provide adequate safeguards to the interests of both faculty members and the Synod; and

WHEREAS, The *Handbook* changes proposed by the Special Task Force on Accreditation in proposed Sections 1.09 d, 1.09 e, and 6.80 clearly place pastor and teacher faculty members under ecclesiastical jurisdiction just as other pastors and teachers are; and

WHEREAS, The Commission on Accrediting of the AATS has given assurance that the proposed Bylaw changes "should provide adequate legal structures for the determination of policy and operation of the seminary (Concordia Seminary, St. Louis) by its Board of Control" and for "the matter of due process with regard to adequate procedural protection of the academic freedom of faculty in Concordia Seminary in St. Louis"; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the following proposed Bylaw changes be made in the *Handbook*:

#### 1.09 Relation of the Synod to its Members

- a. (Remains as is)
- b. (Remains as is)
- c. (Remains as is)

d. Clergy and teacher members of the Synod shall hold their synodical membership in that District in which the congregation they serve holds membership or in which they are serving as District executives. Clergy and teacher members of the Synod who are serving an educational institution of the Synod shall be under the ecclesiastical supervision of the President of the geographical District in which the institution is located.

e. While retaining the right of brotherly dissent, members of the Synod are expected as part of the life together within the synodical fellowship to honor and to uphold the resolutions of the Synod. If such resolutions are of a doctrinal nature, dissent is to be expressed first within the fellowship of peers, then brought to the attention of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations before finding expression as an overture to the convention calling for revision or rescission. While the conscience of the dissenter shall be respected, the consciences of others, as well as the collective will of the Synod, shall also be respected.

#### 2.143 Duties of the Committee for Convention Nominations

- a. (Remains as is)

b. The committee shall inform itself as to the duties and requirements of each position to be filled and be thereby guided in its selection of nominees. In the case of the Boards of Control of synodical institutions the committee shall consult with the Board for Higher Education and receive their nominations for the various Boards of Control for their consideration.

(Last sentence in b represents change)

asked to bring its recommendations to the 1975 synodical convention.

**Action:** None. Referred under omnibus Res. 4-47 to the Board of Directors.

## To Declare Faculty Majority Position in Violation of Article II of the Constitution

### RESOLUTION 3-09

Overtures 3-11A—C, 3-12, 3-13, 3-14A, 3-14B, 3-14C, 3-15A, 3-15B, 3-16, 3-17, 3-18A, 3-18B, 3-19, 3-68, 3-69, 3-70A, B, 3-71, 3-159, 3-171—3-176C, 3-191, 3-192, 3-193A to 3-195B (CW, pp. 117—120, 136—138, 156, 163—164)

#### Introduction

Unity in the church is every Christian's earnest desire. Moreover, it is the express will of God to His people on earth that they "endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Divisions are sinful and ungodly, particularly when they result from a refusal to bow before God's clear Word. The apostle Paul rightly urges "by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1 Cor. 1:10). At the same time God does not countenance a unionistic spirit which tolerates false doctrine in any way or sanctions diversity of teaching, for God's truth can in no way be compromised with error. (Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Matt. 7:15; Matt. 12:30)

With the Reformation came the clear avowal in a sorely torn Christian world that "the Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else" (SA, II, II, 15). Even with the clear-cut affirmation, however, men continued to subject the Scriptures to their own ideas, and the Lutheran church itself was terribly torn by divisions resulting from doctrinal controversies. Even the Augsburg Confession (and the rest of the Confessions that arose during the lifetime of Luther) could be, and were, subverted. The deep-felt rifts and divisions were not healed until 1577, when concerned Lutherans subscribed the Formula of Concord. It was viewed not as a new confession but exposition and defense of the Lutheran Symbols. Unequivocally and without compromise it asserted against the erroneous opinions the true, pure stance of Scripture's teaching in accord with the Confessions previously subscribed. "Being instructed from the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures, we are sure concerning our doctrine and confession," the Confessors stated in the Preface to the *Book of Concord* (Trig., 21). Against "troublesome and contentious men" they issued the *Book of Concord* that "the pure doctrine might be discriminated and separated from the false" (Ibid.). For concord and unity in the church they resolved that "we will also take pains, if either controversies already composed should be renewed, or new controversies concerning religion should arise, to remove and settle them betimes, for the purpose of avoid-

ing offense, without long and dangerous digressions." (Trig., 25)

Our forefathers in this land were convinced of the Scriptural and Confessional rightness of the Confessors of 1580; also that the articles of faith as they had defended them against various foes were "the ecumenical truths of Christendom" and "nothing but consistent Christianity" (Bente, F., Trig., Intr., 256). Unity was God's gift to His church, even as purity of teaching itself; for unity and purity both were linked to the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures.

It was this spirit and stance for which our forefathers opted in the early days of our Synod's history. They struggled with the doctrine of the church, in view of the fact that they were such a little band, fleeing from a sterile, rationalistic theology in Europe. Bowing neither to separatism nor to unionistic spirit, they affirmed: "The Ev. Lutheran Church is that body of Christians which unreservedly receives the doctrine that was again brought to light through Luther's Reformation, summarized and publicly confessed at Augsburg in 1530 and reaffirmed and unfolded in the other Lutheran Symbols, as the pure doctrine of the Word of God" (Walther and the Church, 121). "Not our size but rather our unity in doctrine, is 'our treasure,'" wrote Walther in 1866 to Friedrich Brunn, who was leading a similar struggle for Scriptural truth at Steeden, Germany, where the Lutheran Free Church had its birthplace, a century ago. (Walther Speaks to the Church, Selected Letters, Carl S. Meyer, ed., Concordia, St. Louis, 1973, 23)

Quite rightly, at the 49th convention of our Synod, Milwaukee, 1971, Dr. J. A. O. Preus, asked in his presidential report:

Does an evangelical and confessional church body such as ours have the right and duty to adopt doctrinal statements which are in complete conformity with Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions—and then expect her pastors, teachers, and professors, out of faithfulness to Scripture and the Confessions, to believe, teach, and confess according to such statement[s]?

"In the past," stated Dr. Preus, "the answer has been a resounding yes" (Proceedings, 1971, 54). In the Predestinarian Controversy, e.g., Walther authored a series of articles in the *Lutheraner*, 1880. At the convention in 1881 these theses were adopted. "Whoever opposes the doctrine which we teach according to Scriptures and the Confessions and declares such a doctrine heretical," stated the Synod, "must be taken into church discipline." Expulsion from the Synod was to follow, if the error was persisted in. (Proceedings, 1881, 42—43)

Loyalty to Holy Scripture and the Confessions sets before us "a very great theological reason for insisting on sound doctrine," according to Dr. Preus, and our people have a right to "expect their pastors, teachers, and professors to teach in harmony with them" (Proceedings, 1971, 54). In line with our forefathers within the Lutheran Church, all the way back to the Reformation, at no time was there room within the church for the opinion that matters clearly taught in Scripture could be relegated to the position of open questions.

Dr. Preus laid before the Milwaukee convention the



disturbing facts concerning "doctrinal diversity" threatening Synod's disruption. Specifically he cited the following:

a very *restrictive* understanding of what constitutes 'doctrine'; a confessional subscription . . . limited to the doctrinal points at issue; the contention that "regarding the inspiration of Scripture . . . there is no precise and uniform confessional position"; "difference of opinion on the nature of Biblical authority"; "difference among us on the doctrine of the inerrancy of Scripture"; that they "are inerrant only in their function"; refusal to recognize "the relationship between the material and formal principles of theology," leading to the assertion that "the Gospel rather than the Bible . . . [is] the norm of our theology," a view sometimes called "Gospel reductionism"; reinterpretation of certain Biblical miracle-stories into parables or other literary devices. (*Proceedings*, 1971, 54 f.)

Since the issues centered primarily in the faculty of the St. Louis seminary, Dr. Preus explained that a Fact Finding Committee had been appointed to probe into the "criticisms and questions [that] have been voiced for several years about the theological position of members of this faculty" (*Proceedings*, 56). The Synod supported his judgment and action (Milwaukee Res. 2-23), directing at the same time the Board of Control of the St. Louis seminary "to take appropriate action on the basis of the report." (Milw. Res. 2-28)

In March of 1972, Dr. Preus, in consultation with the vice-presidents, issued *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* with the declared purpose that "these guidelines [were] not to serve as a new standard of orthodoxy, but rather to assist the board of control in identifying areas which need further attention in terms of the Synod's doctrinal position." The St. Louis seminary board "made no use of *A Statement* except to receive it and to ask the faculty to respond."

Response came from the faculty in a sharp and critical reply, April 4. Their "Response" termed the President's *Statement* "unnecessary," "improper," "inadequate theologically," of "a spirit alien to Lutheran confessional theology," "divisive," and "invalid both as an assessment and as a solution of presumed problems at our seminary."

On Sept. 1, 1972, the *Report of the Synodical President* appeared, a book of 160 pages, issued in compliance with Resolution 2-28 and compiled after the President had received the Board of Control's report on June 22, 1972. ("The board to this date has found no false doctrine among the members of the seminary faculty," was the announced conclusion, though problem areas were recognized as existing, and a minority report of the St. Louis seminary board charged that "we cannot report in good conscience that there is no false doctrine.") The synodical President's *Report* was drawn up on the basis of interviews with individual faculty members by the Fact Finding Committee. In his prefatory letter Dr. Preus stated: "We do have problems at

the seminary, which have increasingly threatened the unity of our Synod . . . We have been divided too long . . . While the issues are many and complex, the basic issue is the relationship between the Scriptures and the Gospel. To put the matter in other words, the question is whether the Scriptures are the norm of our faith and life or whether the Gospel alone is that norm." (P. 3)

The President pointed out with dismay that the evidence gathered by the Fact Finding Committee substantiated the following, if not with reference to all, then at least with reference to individual faculty members:

- a. A false doctrine of the nature of the Holy Scriptures coupled with methods of interpretation which effectually erode the authority of the Scriptures.
- b. A substantial undermining of the confessional doctrine of original sin by a *de facto* denial of the historical events on which it is based.
- c. A permissiveness toward certain false doctrines.
- d. A tendency to deny that the Law is a normative guide for Christian behavior.
- e. A conditional acceptance of the Lutheran Confessions.
- f. A strong claim that the seminary faculty need not teach in accord with the Synod's doctrinal stance as expressed in the Synod's official doctrinal statements and resolutions. (P. 25)

With care and in detail the *Report* enlarges on each of the above areas, documenting the fact that, as Dr. Preus sums up in his epilog, "it is evident that the use of the historical-critical method has brought about changes both in our doctrinal stance, our certainty, and our attitudes toward doctrine . . . We have two theologies. With the influential position the seminary holds in the church, its views will prevail unless the Synod directs otherwise and sees to it that its directives are implemented." (P. 148)

Within a week, Sept. 8, 1972, came the *Fact Finding or Fault Finding?* answer of Dr. John H. Tietjen, president of the seminary. The double-column 35-page document rejects the validity of the *Report*, calling it "unfair," "unreliable," "untrue," "less than Scriptural," and "unLutheran," even though the accompanying letter by Dr. Tietjen admits that "there are indeed genuine doctrinal issues that must be confronted and resolved," that the "issue is a doctrinal issue." The same letter characterizes Pres. Preus and the members of the Fact Finding Committee as "our adversaries" (a term used in our Confessions for heretics who reject the Gospel), and expresses doubts about the disagreement with "our adversaries' basic understanding of the nature of the Gospel itself." ("The alternatives are *sharp and mutually exclusive*," according to the *Concordia Theological Monthly*, Nov. 1972, p. 666.)

The issues stated by the *Report* are in no way recognized as true; the procedural method of the Fact Find-

ing Committee is crudely dismissed as "garbage in, garbage out"; its "theology threatens our Synod with grave danger," is Dr. Tietjen's charge, and "is an incipient distortion of the Biblical Gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." And Dr. Tietjen concludes by questioning the theology of the President's committee, implying that it is less than adequate, because "of what it [the Report] says about the theology of the Committee" (p. 35). The faculty majority on Sept. 9, 1972, stated: "We agree with Pres. Tietjen's letter in response to the Report and with his analysis of the fact finding process."

In that same month (Sept. 18—21, 1972) the Council of District Presidents stated that it was "mindful that the church is deeply troubled at the apparent impasse in the matter of the seminary investigation" and offered its assistance in a pastoral way to help adjudicate the problem. It saw fit to "commend the Board of Control for its diligence" and to "encourage each of the professors of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to assure the church of his Biblical and confessional stance." No reference was made by the District Presidents to the efforts of Dr. Preus to confront the issues face-on. Also conspicuous by its absence was any reference to *A Statement*, which the President had offered as guideline to the seminary Board of Control for its task, and to the Fact Finding Committee's "Report" according to which that board had been mandated (Milw., Res. 2-28) "to take appropriate action."

Meanwhile a "Study Edition" of *A Statement* was compiled by the office of the Executive Secretary of the CTCR in Nov. 1972. It called attention to the overwhelmingly favorable response elicited by *A Statement* since the time of its appearance. Without changes to the text of that document, it endeavored merely to amplify the "number of Biblical and confessional references as well as citations from various synodical documents—all without comment—on the matters treated in *A Statement*. It should be noted that, while the Council of Presidents declined to commit itself on *A Statement*, and the faculty had already branded it as not only "unnecessary" and "improper" but also as "inadequate theologically," "alien to Lutheran theology," and "divisive," the response from a grateful church was positive. It was viewed as an urgently needed response which addressed the issues by reaffirming on the one hand the disputed truths on the basis of the Word of God and which, in true Lutheran fashion, including antitheses, clearly rejected the new errors circulating in the church, especially such as had gained some currency among given faculty members.

It is significant for the church, and particularly for the delegates assembled at the 50th convention of the Synod in New Orleans, that the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations, seeking to help the members of Synod see things clearly in the dispute troubling the church, declared its position as regards *A Statement* to be as follows:

We find the doctrinal content of *A Statement* to be in accord with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions

and to contain nothing contrary to them. We also find the doctrinal content of *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* to be in accord with the doctrinal position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod as it has been taught historically and expressed in the official doctrinal statements of the Synod. [Nov. 21, 1972]

Similar statements of approval have come from every quarter of the Synod, from individuals, pastors and laymen, from congregations, circuits, pastoral conferences, and whole Districts. The Board of Control of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Ill., and its faculty have likewise indicated similar support. Our sister churches throughout the world have joined their voices, too, in approval. Negative responses have been minimal in number and lacking in substantial criticism. It seemed that *A Statement* had cleared the air, spelled out the issues, and prepared the Synod for its testing theologically at New Orleans.

Meanwhile late in 1972 the St. Louis faculty majority, responding to the Council of Presidents' recommendation, sought to vindicate its position through the publication of *Faithful To Our Calling, Faithful To Our Lord*, an affirmation in two parts. The first and shorter part represented the joint stance of the faculty (excluding the "minority five"); the second and longer booklet provided individual statements by the faculty members. The latter are by their very nature less significant, since they are of uneven quality and pertinence over against the issues. *Faithful . . . I* is, on the other hand, evidence of a most crucial nature, particularly because "these Discussions present positions responsibly taken on the basis of our Scriptural and Confessional commitment," according to the faculty (p. 4). What is here stated must, therefore, be seen alongside the Fact Finding Committee's "Report" and Dr. Preus' *A Statement*. Close examination will reveal that the main issues detailed by the latter two documents are addressed by the faculty majority in *Faithful . . . I* in such a way as to leave the matters unresolved. Just recently, May 22, 1973, the faculty majority adopted yet another document, titled "Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the 'Report of the Synodical President.'" This document serves to reiterate the faculty's views as expressed in the *Faithful* documents, and, in addition, refuses to recognize the validity of any of the charges of false teaching.

#### Preamble

In view of the provisions of the Synod's Constitution, Art. II, which binds its membership to unqualified commitment to Holy Scriptures and the Confessions, there are, in the current controversy, three areas of particular concern to every member of our church. The first focuses on the *authority of the Scriptural Word*. The second involves the *threat to the Gospel through "Gospel reductionism."* And the last involves the matter of Law and Gospel, not particularly in their distinction, but as regards a proper view of the function of the Law under what the Confessions call "*the Third Use of the Law*," as a guide to Christian behavior. Failure to speak clearly and unequivocally on, or in fact to deny, any

of these articles cited above would constitute a *de facto* violation of Article II of the synodical Constitution, and would, moreover, indicate that a new, unLutheran, un-Scriptural theology is present in the faculty stance.

We shall endeavor now to point out the deviations, limited by space though we must be. We therefore refer the members of the Synod to the respective documents (cited above, Introduction) for their own study and verification of the charges.

1. To begin, the St. Louis seminary faculty in fact abolishes the formal principle, *sola Scriptura* (i.e., that all doctrines are derived from Scripture and that Scripture is the sole norm of all doctrine), by asserting its "freedom in the Gospel," explaining that "the Gospel gives the Scriptures their normative character, not vice versa" (*Faithful . . . I*, p. 21). The Gospel as "governing principle" pervades both *Faithful . . . I* and the more recent faculty "Response." To the question whether there could be any other "governing principle for Lutheran theology" than the "Gospel," the faculty answers:

It is our conviction that any effort, however subtle, to supplement the Gospel so that it is no longer the sole ground of our faith or the governing principle for our theology is to be rejected as unLutheran, contrary to our Confession, and injurious to the mission of the Church. (P. 3)

The same point is repeated with emphasis by the St. Louis seminary faculty in their "Response" (May 22, 1973), p. 21, where they say: "We contend that the Gospel is the basic issue in both interpretation and authority." (Their emphasis)

Clearly, then, not the Scriptures themselves, inspired of God and infallible, are the formal principle in theology for the St. Louis seminary faculty majority, but the "Gospel" abstracted from them. This is an assault against the very heart and marrow of the Lutheran Confessions. Lutherans are pledged to this stance: "Holy Scripture remains the *only* judge, rule, and *norm* according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong" (FC, Epit., Pref.). In similar, clear-cut fashion Luther stated in the Smalcald Articles with reference to the Scriptural Word: "The rule is that the Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel." (II, II, 15)

*Faithful . . . I* grounds its theological approach on the contention that the so-called "historical-critical methodology is neutral" and, in fact, "that all the techniques associated with 'historical-critical' methodology, such as source analysis, form history, and redaction history, are legitimated by the fact that God chose to use as His written Word human documents written by human beings in human language" (p. 41). Actually it can be shown that commitment to this methodology lies at the root of *Faithful . . . I's* regarding the following as in the area of exegetical, open questions: the creation account as given in Gen. 1 and 2; the historicity of Adam and Eve as real, historical persons; the Fall as a historical event detailed factually in Gen. 3; mira-

culous details throughout the Scripture, even events recorded by the evangelists in connection with Christ's life; predictive prophecies in the Old Testament ("The Old Testament — on its own terms — does not explicitly bear witness to Jesus Christ" according to the faculty majority's most recent "Response," "but it proclaims to us the words and deeds of God for Israel."), etc.

Justification for the use of the historical-critical methodology is claimed on the basis of its use under what are termed "Lutheran presuppositions" — being baptized, ordained, professed subscribers to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. The history of Biblical studies has relentlessly borne out, however, that such "neutral" use is a fiction. The substituting of the "Gospel" as the "governing principle" in theology is part of the overall process of the erosion of the Biblical Word as authoritative. The fact that Scripture's inerrancy, verbal inspiration, absolutely unique and divine character are also attacked — ever so subtly at first — simply fits the tragic picture of what has gone on elsewhere in the Christian world.

It is an illusion to think that the Gospel can be held on to, even though the formal principle is yielded by being fused into the "Gospel principle." Christian content and Christian teaching authority are two distinguishable, but two inseparable dimensions of the same God-given reality, God's Word to men. The question cannot be whether the Gospel did not come first, before the written Word; but rather, whether we today have any other rule, judge, norm, touchstone, by which the Gospel may be known among us than Holy Scripture!

2. A second error in the faculty stance concerns "Gospel reductionism."

The term suggests various applications. The first and usual meaning is that where the "Gospel" is established as the "governing principle" instead of the Scriptural Word, then such "Gospelism" reduces to a minimum the content of Christian belief and discards whatever does not seem to serve it directly. Pres. Preus addressed the matter in a *Lutheran Witness* article, "Two Kinds of Bible Authority," April 22, 1973. He stated:

A subordination or limitation of the *normative* authority of Scripture to its Gospel content or function is what we call "Gospel reductionism." By this we mean a reducing of all doctrine to the one doctrine of the Gospel and making the Gospel (often undefined) the only *norm* for all doctrine and life.

As Pres. Preus correctly points out, this often leads to an erosion of the Scripture's authority, especially as regards matters like "history, geography, and nature but also of such important matters as the orders of creation and other expressions of God's will for what we are to believe and do."

Such "Gospelism" corresponds to "fideism," a chief fault in contemporary theology. It separates matters of belief from fact, from miraculous events or details, and questions Scripture's accuracy and historicity in a ruthless manner. That it resembles the "Enthusiasm" ("Schwärmerei") spoken against by our Confessors should be noted.



However, "Gospel reductionism" must be seen as having another dimension, one even more damaging. The Gospel itself becomes clouded, when it no longer has the clear vertical dimension of God being reconciled with sinners through the vicarious atonement of Jesus Christ. As St. Paul states, it is this word of reconciliation which must be proclaimed to men everywhere, in keeping with our Lord's own mandate to carry it to the ends of the world (cf. Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 5:19-20). The charge cannot be that the faculty overtly denies this Gospel. This would be unfair and untrue. Nonetheless, it must be pointed out that throughout *Faithful . . . I*, in spite of the emphasis on "Gospel," there is only a *subdued* reference to Gospel expressed in terms of the forgiveness of sins, in fact, total avoidance, in term and concept, of vicarious satisfaction, substitutionary atonement, imputation of Christ's righteousness (1 John 1:7: "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sins"), and the hope of eternal life in heaven. In its place there appears rather a strong emphasis upon what at best can be described as a lateral-moving sort of "Gospel" that seeks for "the liberation of human beings from all evils" and waits to be instructed by "the thought patterns of every culture" (cp. *Faithful . . . I*, 32, 20, 24). With this there is a definite, studied avoidance of Christ's avowal concerning the Old Testament Scriptures that "they are they which testify of Me." (John 5:39)

Existentialistic theology (freedom to achieve self-understanding and authentic existence by internalizing of personal religious experience) has severely undercut the content of Christian faith in our day. It is with considerable apprehension, therefore, that note must be taken of the faculty's emphasis on the "meaning" of a given Biblical episode rather than on both the fact and its meaning together (cp. *Faithful . . . I*, 17, 19, 23, 25, 26, 37). *There is no possible way of protecting the Gospel, once the fact is separated from the meaning. Both must stand, or the Gospel is destroyed.*

It is pertinent in this connection to observe that the historical-critical methodology, by its very presuppositions, acts as a judge over Scripture, and subjects it to cold rationalistic judgment as one would any other human document. This means that the anthropocentric (man-centered) approach, which the historical-critical method uses on the text, regularly spills over in judgment against the content of Scripture. Francis Pieper, in a very discerning insight, years ago, stated: "Synergism in soteriology is basically related to and on a par with synergism in Scriptural interpretation; both proceed on the analogy of the human ego" (*Lehre u. Wehre*, 53, 531). This simply means that when man lords it over the text, he ends by lording it over his own salvation as well.

The seeds of "Gospel reductionism" appear throughout the faculty's documents. At the same time it must be granted in all fairness that the faculty's stress on the Gospel—when understood in Scripture's terms of God's forgiving grace to sinners for Christ's sake—is

a very salutary, healthy emphasis in theology at all times, the chief and central article of the Christian faith, as our Confessions attest. What is lacking is a clear, unambiguous attestation that this Gospel is ours today as a result of the Holy Spirit's working through the normative and causative authority of Holy Scripture. Without this mooring other "gospels" and "doctrines of men" are bound to intrude. In the Large Catechism Luther puts his finger on this point precisely: "I and my neighbor and, in short, all men may err and deceive, but the Word of God cannot err or deceive." (*Trig.*, 57)

3. The proper and clear distinction between Law and Gospel is crucial in Christian theology. Particularly Lutheran theology has in this matter rendered distinguished service to all of Christendom, since the time of the Reformation. The faculty has rightly stressed the importance of the Law/Gospel distinction for theology, particularly in its pastoral application. Never, however, dare this important distinction be used against the Scripture at any point, particularly not as a delimiting mechanism by which given material, passages, episodes, etc., are accounted as incidental or even unnecessary for faith's acceptance.

Nor may the stress on the third use of the Law, as a guide for Christian behavior, and as testified by the Formula of Concord in Article VI, be set aside. It is this latter stress which is conspicuously side-tracked in the faculty's most recent document, "Response." The assurance is first given, that "no one on the faculty rejects the third use of the Law as outlined in the Formula of Concord." Yet the explication which follows upon this is a studied effort at emphasizing "the continuing significance of the Ten Commandments as God's law exposing human sin"—a thing which no Lutheran denies but which is the *Second Use* of the Law! The faculty then adds the ambivalent assertion that "the Christian is led by the Spirit of Christ to be free and to face up to the criticism of the Law and move beyond that criticism to deal in love with people" and that "the Scriptures do offer guidance in what it means to love one's neighbor as oneself." The same kind of "confusion and ambiguity," in fact "rejection of the third use of the Law," was noted in the Fact Finding Committee's Report. (120 ff.)

This manner of speaking fits exactly contemporary neo-Lutheranism's denial that Luther ever taught the third use of the Law. The fact is, of course, that Luther did teach it. (In his *Galatian Commentary* he calls the Law "the command" or "the rule" (LW 27, 82) and urges that "when we have taught faith in Christ, then we also teach about good works" (LW 26, 133); thereupon he lists the commandments and makes his exhortation according to them. (Cp. also Luther's Catechisms and his hymn, "That man a godly life might live, God did these Ten Commandments give . . ." *Lutheran Hymnal*, No. 287.) Above all, and in keeping with Holy Scripture, the Formula of Concord asserts very clearly and emphatically the fact and the significance of the

third use of the Law in the life of the Christian believer. (Cp. FC, SD, V, 17; VI, 15, Epit. VI, 1)

These three areas of concern are sufficient to demonstrate that the theological, doctrinal stance of the faculty is at variance with our Synod's teaching. Other specific points of deviation could be listed (e.g., the eroding of the doctrine of original sin by a *de facto* denial of the historical events on which this doctrine is based), but these have already been accounted for in the President's *A Statement* and the Fact Finding Committee's "Report." The validity of this charge, that another theology has intruded into our Synod through the faculty majority's stance, is borne out by their own documents, which corroborate and underscore the specific points at variance.

It now becomes evident that by: (1) the subverting of the Scriptural Word as the formal principle, or touchstone, by which all teachers and all teaching are to be judged; (2) by introducing a Gospel-reductionism (by whatever definition it is considered); (3) by adopting neo-Lutheranism's rejection of the third use of the Law; the faculty has in effect and in fact put itself in opposition to Article II of the Synod's Constitution. While subscription of that article is professed — and in given individual instances may indeed still be true and real — the fact remains that by the *de facto* denial of the formal principle, *sola Scriptura*, by the establishing of the "Gospel" as the "governing principle" in theology, and by all the attendant aberrations and reductions of Scriptural teaching which follow upon such methodology, the end result is that Article II has been effect-

ally, but sadly, eroded. The faculty majority exults in the "freedom of the Gospel," but the documents show another course of freedom: not merely that two sides are talking past each other, or that so-called allowable variations in theological opinion are at issue, or that unwisely the faculty has accused Dr. Preus, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, et al. — all who have expressed their support of *A Statement* and its supporting evidence — of being *unLutheran*, *unScriptural*, *unConfessional*; but also that the faculty itself has opted for neo-Lutheran theological stance which allows historical-critical methodology to dictate given judgments, both against Scripture and also against the Confessions. To claim at this point that the Synod's concern for doctrinal discipline is "Law" and "legalistic," and to plead that we must deal "pastorally with one another," "evangelically," and, with a wringing of the hands, to claim that the "Gospel alone must rule," is to confuse the issue. As the apostle Paul makes sharply plain in Gal. 1:8-9, the Gospel, and all of the facts and acts of God that belong to it, are, if anything, even more intolerant of deviation than the Law. The "freedom in the Gospel" does not allow us to depart from the "old paths" spelled out by our Constitution in Art. II with its unequivocal upholding of and subscription to the Scriptures and the Confessions.

WHEREAS, The Synod is pledged under its Constitution, as the first objective of its organization, to "the conservation and promotion of the unity of the true faith (Eph. 4:3-6; 1 Cor. 1:10) and a united defense against schism and sectarianism (Rom. 16:17)" (cf. Art. III, 1); and

WHEREAS, "The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation:

"1. 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;

"2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God . . ." (Art. II); and

WHEREAS, The theological, doctrinal stance of the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has been shown to be in violation of Art. II of the Synod's Constitution, specifically on

1. the three points listed and explained above:

- a. subversion of the authority of Scripture (formal principle);
- b. "Gospelism" or "Gospel reductionism" whereby the authority of Scripture is reduced to its "Gospel" content;
- c. denial of the third use of the Law, i.e., the function of the Law as guide for the Christian in his life;

2. the issues as described in the Fact Finding Committee's *Report of the Synodical President*, Sept. 1, 1972 (p. 25 and previously listed above); and

WHEREAS, The St. Louis faculty majority, with Dr.



Dr. Lewis Niemoeller reporting for Committee 3



John Tietjen, in their several responses [*Fact Finding or Fault Finding?* (Sept. 8, 1972); "Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis" to Dr. Preus' *A Statement* (April 4, 1972); *Faithful To Our Calling, Faithful To Our Lord*, Parts I & II (Dec. 1972); "Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the 'Report of the Synodical President'" (May 22, 1973)], have refused to acknowledge as true any of the charges of false doctrine, thus any violation of Art. II of the Constitution; and

WHEREAS, Said documents provide written evidence of the deviations in doctrine as charged; and

WHEREAS, The synodical floor committee on seminary issues has met with Pres. Tietjen and his advisory faculty committee and ascertained that there has been no retraction or change relative to the faculty's position; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has failed to recognize the validity of the charges contained in Pres. Preus' *Report* (Sept. 1, 1972) as based on the Fact Finding Committee's report; and

WHEREAS, It is in keeping with our Lutheran heritage, specifically our commitment to and under the Lutheran Confessions "that the opinion of the party in error cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended" (Formula of Concord, SD, Preface, 9); therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Synod assert its continuing concern for "the conservation and promotion of the unity of the true faith" in accord with Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod repudiate that attitude toward Holy Scripture, particularly as regards its authority and clarity, which reduces to theological opinion or exegetical questions matters which are in fact clearly taught in Scripture (e.g., facticity of miracle accounts and their details; historicity of Adam and Eve as real persons; the fall of Adam and Eve into sin as a real event, to which original sin and its imputation upon all succeeding generations of mankind must be traced; the historicity of every detail in the life of Jesus as recorded by the evangelists; predictive prophecies in the Old Testament which are in fact Messianic; the doctrine of angels; the Jonah account, etc.); and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod recognize that the matters referred to in the second resolved are in fact false doctrine running counter to the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the synodical stance and for that reason "cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended" (FC, SD, Preface, 9); and be it finally

*Resolved*, That these matters be turned over to the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

**Action:** Adopted as amended (13).

(Originally the resolution had contained only three resolveds, with the third reading: "That the Synod recognize

that the theological position defended by the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo., is in fact false doctrine. . . ." After the resolution had been discussed in Sessions 11 and 12, the floor committee offered an amendment rewording the third resolved as finally adopted and adding the fourth resolved. Special rules introduced from the floor and developed by a group including the chairman of the floor committee and the president of the seminary were followed. A motion to remove Resolution 3-09 from consideration was defeated in Session 11, as was an amendment in Session 12 "that these matters be decided by September 1, 1973." After debate on the amendment proposed by the floor committee had been concluded the amendment was adopted, 646 to 366. The question on the resolveds as now amended was called by a standing vote of 678 to 311. After the preamble and whereases had been discussed the question was called for and delegates agreed to close debate, 671 to 321. The entire resolution as amended was then adopted, 574 to 451. Legal counsel for the Synod read a statement into the record in view of a protest which had been filed. For an extended report see Minutes for Sessions 11, 12, and 13.)

## To Deal with the St. Louis Board of Control

### RESOLUTION 3-10

Overtures 3-11A—C, 3-82, 3-141—3-150B

(CW, pp. 150—153)

WHEREAS, The Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod provides as the first object of the Synod "the conservation and promotion of the unity of the true faith" and as the third object of the Synod "the training of ministers and teachers for service in the Evangelical Lutheran Church"; and

WHEREAS, The third object of the Synod must be carried out in the light of the first object; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Control has defined "commending" as "the equivalent of stating that the professor was not guilty of false doctrine but was teaching in accord with the Scriptures and the Confessions"; and has defined "to correct" as "the equivalent of saying that the professor was not teaching in accord with Scriptures and the Confessions and was therefore open to the charge of false doctrine"; and

WHEREAS, The Board of Control has failed to carry out its responsibilities in protecting the doctrinal position of the Synod as is evident from its "commending" the entire faculty; therefore be it

*Resolved*, That the Synod express its grave concern for the failure of the Board of Control to carry out its responsibilities; and be it further

*Resolved*, That the Synod call upon those board members who have supported President Tietjen and the faculty majority to repent; and be it finally

*Resolved*, That the Synod call on those board members who cannot in good conscience carry out their responsibilities under the synodical *Handbook* or who are unwilling to do so to resign.

**Action:** None. Referred under omnibus Res. 4-47 to the Board of Directors.