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Miscellanea

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Miscellanea.

Declaration of Principles Concerning the Church and Its External Relationships.*

WHEREAS, During the past two years the Executive Board has been asked repeatedly to define the attitude of The United Lutheran Church in America toward cooperative movements, both within and without the Lutheran Church, toward movements of various kinds looking in the direction of church union, and toward organizations, tendencies, and movements, some of them within and some of them without the organized Church; and

WHEREAS, The Constitution of The United Lutheran Church in America (Art. VIII, Sec. 1) and its By-Laws (Sec. 5, Div. C, Items 1 and 2) require that the forming and dissolving of "relations with other bodies, organizations, and movements" lies within the power of The United Lutheran Church alone and that "all questions affecting the principles, practise, and policy of the Church as a whole" shall be referred to the Church for decision; therefore,

The Executive Board submits to The United Lutheran Church the following DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES CONCERNING THE CHURCH AND ITS EXTERNAL RELATIONSHIPS and recommends it for adoption.

In order that all misunderstandings and misconstructions of this Declaration or of any of its parts may be avoided, The United Lutheran Church in America declares in advance that it does not regard the statements therein contained as altering or amending the Confessions of the Church in any particular or as changing the doctrinal basis of The United Lutheran Church set forth in Article II of the Constitution. On the contrary, it considers this Declaration nothing more than the application to present conditions of doctrines already contained in the Confessions.

A. Concerning the Catholic Spirit in the Church.

I. In its Confessions the Evangelical Lutheran Church declares its belief that there is "one holy Church," which "will continue forever." It defines this Church as the "congregation of saints and true believers." (Augsb. Conf., VII and VIII.)

II. This one holy Church performs its earthly functions and makes its presence known among men through groups of men who profess to be believers in Jesus Christ. In these groups the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered. To such groups also the name "Church" is given in the New Testament and in the Confessions of our Church.

III. The existence of the one holy Church is not capable of demonstration. It is a "mystery" that can be apprehended only by faith. To the eyes of men it appears that there is not one Church, but only many

* Adopted at the Second Convention of the United Lutheran Church in America at Washington, D. C., October 26, 1920.

churches; nevertheless we believe that there is but one Church of Jesus Christ. This conviction rests upon our belief in the continued life of Christ in all His Christians, binding them together into one spiritual Body, of which He is the Head, and building them up into one spiritual Temple, of which He is the Corner-stone; and upon our belief in the efficacy of the Word of God and the Sacraments as Means of Grace (A. C., V). We believe that wherever the Word of God is preached and the Sacraments are administered, the Holy Spirit works faith in Christ. In every such place therefore there are believers in Jesus Christ, and wherever there are believers, there the one holy Church is present. For this reason we call the Word and the Sacraments "marks" or "signs" of the one holy Church. Therefore the Augsburg Confession adds to its definition of the Church the words, "in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered."

IV. In the Nicene Creed we confess our belief that this Church is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic."

1. We believe that this Church is one because we believe that there cannot be more than one "congregation of saints and true believers," or more than one spiritual Body, of which Christ is the Head, or more than one spiritual Temple, of which He is the Corner-stone.

2. We believe that this Church is holy because we believe that to all believers the righteousness of Christ is given, with the forgiveness of their sins, for which reason true believers are called "saints" in the New Testament and in the Confessions of our Church. Moreover, the Holy Spirit, through the Word and the Sacraments preached and administered in the churches, does progressively create holiness of life and will and purpose in all those who believe and progressively unites their lives with the continued life of Christ.

3. We believe that this one holy Church is catholic because we believe that, since there is but one "congregation of saints and true believers," it must include all the saints and true believers, of every time and place (Apol., chap. IV). By the term "catholic" therefore we describe that quality of universality which belongs to the Church as a spiritual reality, or object of faith (cf. III, above), and raises it above all local and temporal forms of expression in organization, rite, and ceremony.

4. We believe that this one, holy, catholic Church is also apostolic, not because of the union of its members in any one organization which claims to possess external, historical connection with the apostles, but because we believe that the faith in Jesus Christ, which all the members of the one, holy, catholic Church have in common, is the same faith that was in the hearts and lives of the apostles of Jesus Christ; and because we believe that this faith has been, and still is, perpetuated by the unbroken testimony of believers through all the centuries of Christian history, from the days of the apostles to the present day; and because we believe that in the Holy Scriptures we have a permanent and authoritative record of that apostolic truth which is the ground of Christian faith.

V. Every group of professing Christians calling itself a Church will seek to express in its own life the attributes of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. This it does:—

1. By professing faith in Jesus Christ. Faith in Christ, as the Savior of the world and the Revealer of the will and love of God the Father, is necessary to the existence of the Church. Therefore no group of men, however organized, which does not exist as a congregation of professed believers in Jesus Christ may claim the name of Church; for it is Christ Himself, living, by the Holy Spirit, in believing Christians, who makes the Church one and holy.

2. By preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments. Every group calling itself a Church must preach the Word and administer the Sacraments; for these are the means through which the Holy Spirit works faith and thus creates and perpetuates the one holy Church. Therefore the Word and the Sacraments are properly called "marks" of the Church (cf. III, above), for where they are present, the Church is; where they are absent, the Church is not and cannot be.

In the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments every group of Christians seeks to express the apostolic character of the one holy Church. Every such group bases its preaching and teaching upon the Scriptures and endeavors to proclaim what it has learned from them. Believing that it has correctly ascertained this truth, it becomes its duty to teach, preach, and confess it fully, freely, and courageously. Christians must not only profess their faith in Christ, but must also confess and publicly declare what they believe about Christ and His Gospel; this duty of every Christian is the imperative duty of every group of Christians calling itself a Church.

3. By works of serving love. The ideals of love and service which Christ has taught as the true ideals of the individual Christian life must also be the ideals of any group calling itself a Church. The love of Christians for God and His Christ, for one another and their fellow-men, is a motive strong enough to drive them to works of service, and this love, itself a creation of God the Holy Spirit within the hearts of men, sets tasks for every group that calls itself a Church. They are tasks of service, not of government; of love, not of law (cf. D, IV, 3, below). These works of love and service are a witness to the faith that lives in the whole group and an evidence of the presence of the living Christ and are in themselves a proclamation of the Gospel. In outward form they may appear to be merely humanitarian and altruistic; in motive they are Christian, born of the love of Christ and performed in His name and in obedience to His command.

4. By the attempt to secure universal acceptance of the truth which it holds and confesses. Such an attempt need not be accompanied by the effort to enlarge its own external organization by drawing into its membership Christians of other organizations; for the aim of a Church should be not to make proselytes, but to spread the truth of the Gospel. To this end it will constantly bear witness to the truth which it believes, and by this testimony and by the cultivation of sympathy with all those who hold the same truth every group will seek to attain universality and thus express completely the holy Church's attribute of catholicity.

5. To accomplish these purposes (Nos. 1—4, above), every such group will maintain the office of the ministry, commanded and instituted by

Christ. For the sake of good order and efficiency further organization is also necessary; but the forms which the organization takes will vary with circumstances of time and place and are in themselves matters of expediency.

VI. Every group of professing Christians in which the Word of God is so preached and the Sacraments are so administered that men are saved therein is truly, partial and imperfect as it may be, an expression of the one holy Church (cf. II, above), inasmuch as it displays the marks of the Church (cf. III and V, 2, above). Therefore no one group can rightfully claim that it is the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in the sense in which these terms have been defined above (No. IV).

We believe, however, that distinctions must be recognized between one group and another. In making these distinctions, we believe that those groups in which the Word of God is most purely preached and confessed, according to the Holy Scriptures, and in which the Sacraments are administered in the closest conformity to the institution of Christ will be the most complete expression of the one holy Church. For this reason it is necessary that, when occasion arises, any such group of Christians shall define its relationship to other groups which also claim the name of Church as well as to other groups and organizations which do not bear that name.

VII. This definition of relationship should be framed in the spirit of catholicity. Moved by that spirit, a Church will always be ready:—

1. To declare unequivocally what it believes concerning Christ and His Gospel and to endeavor to show that it has placed the true interpretation upon that Gospel (cf. V, 2 and 4, above) and to testify definitely and frankly against error.

2. To approach others without hostility, jealousy, suspicion, or pride, in the sincere and humble desire to give and receive Christian service.

3. To grant cordial recognition to all agreements which are discovered between its own interpretation of the Gospel and that which others hold.

4. To cooperate with other Christians in works of serving love (cf. V, 3, above) in so far as this can be done without surrender of its interpretation of the Gospel, without denial of conviction, and without suppression of its testimony as to what it holds to be the truth.

B. Concerning the Relation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church-Bodies to One Another.

In the case of those church-bodies calling themselves Evangelical Lutheran and subscribing the Confessions which have always been regarded as the standards of Evangelical Lutheran doctrine, The United Lutheran Church in America recognizes no doctrinal reasons against complete cooperation and organic union with such bodies.

C. Concerning the Organic Union of Protestant Churches.

In view of the wide-spread discussion concerning the organic union of the Protestant Churches in America we declare:—

I. That we hold the union of Christians in a single organization to be of less importance than the agreement of Christians in the proclamation

of the Gospel. We believe that the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church exists through and under divergent forms of external organization. Union of organization we hold therefore to be a matter of expediency; agreement in testimony to be a matter of principle.

II. That, holding the preaching of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments to be the primary function of every Church, we believe that a clear definition of what is meant by "Gospel" and "Sacrament" must precede any organic union of the churches. We believe that a permanent and valid union of churches must be based upon positive agreements concerning the truth for which the united church-body is to stand. The churches cannot unite as mere protestants, but only as confessors. (Cf. A, V, 2; VII, 4.)

III. That as a necessary step toward a genuine organic union we believe that the Protestant church-bodies in America should endeavor to set forth, definitely and positively, the views of Christian truth for which each of them does now actually stand in order that by their clear and unequivocal testimony to what they hold to be the truth the nature and extent of their agreements and disagreements may become apparent.

IV. That we recognize the obligation which rests upon us to make a clear and full declaration concerning the truth which we hold and are therefore ready, as opportunity offers, to give answer concerning our reasons for accepting and maintaining the doctrines and principles set forth in the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

V. That until a more complete unity of confessions is attained than now exists, The United Lutheran Church in America is bound in duty and in conscience to maintain its separate identity as a witness to the truth which it knows; and its members, its ministers, its pulpits, its fonts, and its altars must testify only to that truth.

D. Concerning Cooperative Movements among the Protestant Churches.

In view of the many proposals for cooperation of the Protestant churches in various departments of practical activity and in view of the many organizations already formed, and in process of formation, for the carrying on of such cooperative work, we declare:—

I. That it is our earnest desire to cooperate with other church-bodies in all such works as can be regarded as works of serving love through which the faith of Christians finds expression; provided that such cooperation does not involve the surrender of our interpretation of the Gospel, the denial of conviction, or the suppression of our testimony to what we hold to be the truth. (Cf. A, V, 4; VII, 3, above.) In this connection, however, we call attention to the Constitution of The United Lutheran Church in America, Article VIII, Section 1: "No synod, conference, or board or any official representative thereof shall have the power of independent affiliation with general organizations and movements," and also to the By-Laws, Article V, Division C, Item 2: "No official relationship with any other ecclesiastical bodies or their agencies shall be entered into by any board or committee of The United Lutheran Church in America without the approval of the Church."

II. That we cannot give general approval to all cooperative movements and organizations of the churches, since we hold that cooperation is not an end in itself, but merely a means to an end. Our attitude toward any such organization or movement must be determined by a consideration of —

(a) The purposes which it seeks to accomplish.

(b) The principles on which it rests.

(c) The effect which our participation will produce upon the independent position of our Church as a witness to the truth of the Gospel which we confess. (Cf. C, VII, above.)

III. That, holding the following doctrines and principles, derived from the Holy Scriptures, to be fundamental to the Christian message, we propose them as a positive basis of practical cooperation among the Protestant churches. To avoid all possible misunderstandings or misconstructions of these statements, we declare that we do not regard them as a summary of Lutheran doctrine or as an addition to, a substitute for, or a modification of, the Confessions of our Church; nor do we propose them as an adequate basis for an organic union of the churches, but merely as a criterion by which it may be possible for us to determine our attitude toward proposed movements of cooperation.

1. The Fatherhood of God, revealed in His Son Jesus Christ, and the sonship bestowed by God through Christ upon all who believe in Him.

2. The true Godhead of Jesus Christ and His redemption of the world by His life and death and resurrection; and His living presence in His Church.

3. The continued activity of God the Holy Spirit among men, calling them into the fellowship of Jesus Christ and enlightening and sanctifying them through the gifts of His grace.

4. The supreme importance of the Word of God and the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper as the means through which the Holy Spirit testifies of Christ and thus creates and strengthens faith. (In common with the whole Evangelical Lutheran Church we confess the mystery of the Real Presence in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, and we invite all Christians to a renewed study of the teachings of the Holy Scriptures concerning this Sacrament and the Sacrament of Holy Baptism.)

5. The authority of the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the only rule and standard by which all doctrines and teachers are to be judged.

6. The reality and universality of sin and the inability of men because of sin to attain righteousness or earn salvation through their own character or works.

7. The love and the righteousness of God, who for Christ's sake bestows forgiveness and righteousness upon all who believe in Christ.

8. The present existence upon earth of the kingdom of God, founded by His Son Jesus Christ, not as an external organization, but as a spiritual reality and an object of faith.

9. The hope of Christ's second coming to be the Judge of the living and the dead and to complete the kingdom of God.

IV. That in view of the above statements our attitude toward proposed cooperative movements and organizations, already defined in principle in Section A, VII and D. I, above, must be subject to the following limitations: —

1. We cannot enter into any cooperative movement or organization which denies any of the doctrines or principles set forth in III, above.

2. We cannot enter into any organization or movement which limits the cooperating churches in their confession of the truth or their testimony against error. In all cooperative movements we claim the right, and regard it as a duty, to testify freely to the truth as it is set forth in the Confessions of our Church, and we believe that the same right must be guaranteed to every participating Church. All such testimony should receive a courteous and respectful hearing.

3. We cannot enter into cooperative movements or organizations whose purposes lie outside the proper sphere of church activity. In determining what that sphere is, we must be guided by the fundamental principle that the functions of the Church are the preaching of the Word, the administration of the Sacraments, and the performance of works of love (cf. A, V, above). We hold that the use of the church organization as an agency for securing the enactment and enforcement of law or for the application of other methods of external force is foreign to the true purpose for which the Church exists.

V. That there are organizations and movements into which we cannot enter as a Church, in regard to which, however, the Church may definitely declare itself and which it may heartily commend to the pastors and members of its congregations as important spheres of activity for Christians, such as movements and organizations for social and political reform, the enforcement of law and order, the settlement of industrial conflicts, the improvement of the material environments of life, and the like.

E. Concerning Movements and Organizations Injurious to the Christian Faith.

In view of the prevalence throughout our land of doctrines which are subversive of the Christian faith; and in view of the indifference manifested by many Christian people to the doctrines and principles of the teachers, sects, and organizations which seek their adherence and support; and in view of the fact that through the acceptance of religious and other teachings which contradict the Gospel of Christ the faith of Christians is endangered; we declare —

I. That we solemnly warn all our pastors and the members of our congregations against all teachers, sects, and organizations of any kind whose doctrines and principles contradict the truths set forth in Section D, III, of this Declaration or which limit their adherents or members in a free confession of their Christian faith (Cf. A, V, 3, above.)

II. That we warn them especially against all teachers, sects, and societies whose doctrines and principles deny the reality of sin, the personality of God, the full and complete Godhead of our Lord Jesus Christ and His redemption of the world by His sufferings and death, and the truth and authority of the Holy Scriptures; as well as against all teachers,

sects, and societies which teach that men can be saved from sin or can become righteous before God by their own works or by any other means than the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ. We believe that such doctrines are not only not Christian, but are anti-Christian and destructive of true Christian faith and life.

III. That inasmuch as these and other false and dangerous doctrines are widely spread, not only by the activity of individual teachers, but also by the dissemination of literature and through the agency of societies and other organizations calling themselves by various names, which oftentimes conceal the real nature of the doctrines and principles for which they stand, we therefore lay it upon the consciences of the pastors and of the members of all our congregations to scrutinize with the utmost care the doctrines and principles of all teachers, sects, organizations, and societies of every sort which seek their adherence and support and to refuse such adherence and support in all cases of conflict or possible contradiction between these principles and doctrines and those set forth in Holy Scripture and in the Confessions of the Church. In the application of this principle the Church should always appeal to a conscience which it is her sacred duty to enlighten, patiently and persistently, from the Word of God. (Cf. also Constitution of The United Lutheran Church in America, Art. VIII, Sec. 6.)*

Salesmanship.

The following paragraphs, taken from the house organ of a printing firm, may readily be translated into terms of a pastor's salesmanship for the Lord:—

"Salesmanship is as much a profession as is the practise of law or medicine.

"Experience has proved that a salesman can build up a clientele in the same manner as a lawyer or a physician, provided he realizes that, to hold his 'practise,' his trade, he must continually strive to render the utmost in service as well as quality.

"To build up a clientele for yourself as well as a list of profitable accounts for your firm [we should say, an organization of Christians eager in the service of the Lord], first know your goods, then study proper methods of approach. 'First impressions are lasting.'

"Merely presenting your card and saying you represent the 'So-and-so Company' is negative and will not cause a favorable impression. . . . Your prospect is not interested in you or in the name of the company you represent; he is interested in furthering the interest of the business he represents.

"Too many salesmen make their approach apologetically, and the impressions conveyed to the prospect are doubt and suspicion.

"Believe in what you are selling. Believe in yourself and believe that you are rendering a helpful service, and your approach will come naturally."

P. E. K.

* EDITORIAL NOTE.—In view of recent developments in the American Lutheran Church and the United Lutheran Church, it was considered advisable to offer the *Washington Declaration* of the latter body to our readers, for the present without comment. As to the *Minneapolis Theses* and the *Chicago Theses* of the American Lutheran Church, see Vol. I, 688 ff.