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The Binding Nature of Synodical Resolutions for a Pastor or Professor of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod

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THE AUTHOR ARGUES THAT THE PRINCIPLE THAT PUTS SYNODICAL RESOLUTIONS OF a doctrinal nature on a par with the Lutheran Symbols is unacceptable because it is un-Lutheran, unconstitutional, contrary to the advisory nature of the Synod, and too broad to be meaningful and valid.

Pastors and professors of The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod are members of that Synod who voluntarily pledge themselves to its Constitution, particularly to Article II, which deals with the Synod's confessional basis. They accept "without reservation":

1. 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;

2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God

By their ordination vow they have pledged themselves to "the canonical books of the Old and the New Testament [as] the inspired Word of God and the only infallible rule of faith and practice" and to the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions as being "in agreement with this one Scriptural faith." Finally, they have promised to perform the duties of their office in accordance with the Scriptures and the Confessions.

Today we are faced with the question:

"What is the place of synodical resolutions that deal with doctrinal matters? Are such resolutions binding on pastors and professors who are members of the Synod? Are they on a par with the Lutheran Confessions? Or are they resolutions which pastors and professors may accept, or be urged to accept, out of Christian love when it appears expedient to do so in the face of circumstances that exist at that time?"

It is evident that there are some in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod who believe that all synodical resolutions of a doctrinal nature are binding on all members of the Synod. Some even go as far as to regard them on a par with the Lutheran Confessions even in such cases when they go beyond the scope of the Word and the Confessions. Because they believe that all synodical resolutions of a doctrinal nature are binding, they maintain such resolutions determine a person's eligibility to be a minister or professor in the Synod.

This paper argues that synodical resolutions of a doctrinal nature are under no circumstances to be placed on a par with

the Confessions of the Lutheran Church but rather are acceptable only insofar as they agree with the confessional basis of the Synod (Article II of the Constitution). They are always under the Symbols and cannot serve as confessional norms. The principle that elevates them to normative status must be rejected for the following reasons:

I

THE PRINCIPLE IS UN-LUTHERAN

In theological discussions and controversies the sole and final norm for a Lutheran is Scripture. This is attested throughout the Confessions.

1. We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged, as it is written in Ps. 119:105, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." And Saint Paul says in Gal. 1:8, "Even if an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed."

Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times.¹

The confessional principle regarding doctrinal formulations is expressed in the

¹ Epitome, Rule and Norm, 1, pp. 464—65. (Page references are given according to *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1959].)

Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm, paragraphs 9 and 10:

Here he [Luther] expressly asserts by way of distinction that the Word of God is and should remain the sole rule and norm of all doctrine, and that no human being's writings dare be put on a par with it, but that everything must be subjected to it.

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 [German, *wofern*; Latin, *quatenus*, insofar as] they are in accord with the aforementioned pattern of doctrine [that is, the three Ecumenical Creeds, the Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, Luther's Large and Small Catechisms] they are to be accepted and used as helpful expositions and explanations. Our intention was only to have a single, universally accepted, certain, and common form of doctrine which all our Evangelical churches subscribe and from which and according to which, because [German, *weil*; Latin, *cum*] it is drawn from the Word of God, all other writings are to be approved and accepted, judged and regulated.²

Theodore Graebner has argued, however, that there has been a noticeable tendency in the Missouri Synod to give "undue weight to the opinions of the fathers" rather than the Holy Scriptures. In his essay "The Burden of Infallibility: A Study in the History of Dogma" (1948) he described this practice as unique in the Christian church:

No discussion of any doctrinal subject has taken place within the last thirty years

² *The Book of Concord*, pp. 505—6.

which has not operated with quotations from Luther, Walther, Pieper, and the first thirty volumes of *Lehre und Wehre* and our body of synodical essays. I challenge anyone to look into the literature of any church but our own to find anything parallel to this situation. While maintaining as an absolute standard the authority of the Scriptures alone, we have followed the method inaugurated by Dr. Walther under fundamentally different circumstances and for a purpose not in the least relevant to our present time, — the quoting from the fathers to settle a doctrinal or exegetical question. We are hardly aware of the fact that in all the wide world no one proceeds in such a manner to make good a claim of soundness or correctness.³

Furthermore, when we ask the question, "What is a Lutheran?" we turn to the Lutheran Confessions for our answers because we believe that they are derived from Scripture and are in conformity with it. "In that sense," F. E. Mayer says, the Confessions "are a 'derived' rule and standard according to which the preaching in Lutheran Churches is judged (*norma normata*)."⁴

This principle is set forth repeatedly in the Confessions. The following paragraphs offer a particularly clear example:

In this way the distinction between the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and all other writings is maintained, and Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong.

³ *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, XXXVIII (July 1965), 88.

⁴ *Religious Bodies of America* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1954), p. 138.

Other symbols and other writings are not judges like Holy Scripture, but merely witnesses and expositions of the faith, setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood in the church of God by contemporaries with reference to controverted articles, and how contrary teachings were rejected and condemned.⁵

When considering the nature of synodical resolutions dealing with doctrinal matters we need to heed again the words of C. F. W. Walther.

The principle means, by which our opponents endeavor to support their doctrine, consists in continually quoting passages from the private writings of the fathers of the Church, published subsequently to the Formula of Concord. But whenever a controversy arises concerning the question of whether a doctrine is *Lutheran*, we must not ask: "What does this or that 'father' of the Lutheran Church teach in his private writings?" for he also may have fallen into error; on the contrary we must ask: "What does the *public* CONFESSIO*N* of the Lutheran Church teach concerning the controverted point?" for in her confession our Church has recorded for all times, what she believes, teaches, and confesses, for the very reason, that no controversy may arise concerning the question what our Lutheran Church believes. . . .⁶

⁵ Formula of Concord, Epitome, Rule and Norm, 3, p. 465, 7.8.

⁶ *The Controversy Concerning Predestination*, trans. Aug. Crull (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1881), p. 5. Similarly Walther said in his first presidential address in 1848: "According to the constitution under which our synodical union exists, we have merely the power to *advise* one another, that we have only the *power of the Word*, and of *convincing*. According to our constitution we have no right to formulate decrees, to pass laws and

The synod, in fact, has no authority to declare a doctrine. It can only confess a doctrine. This is an important distinction. Francis Pieper elaborates on this point:

The order that obtains in the Christian Church is this: If the question at issue pertains to matters taught and decided in God's Word, the Christian position is that no man and no assembly of men, no matter how learned and renowned they may be, can decide for a Christian what is Scriptural doctrine. This matter every single Christian must decide for himself on the basis of the clear, infallible Word of God.⁷

Elsewhere Pieper stated:

In general, when the power to make binding decisions and laws in the Church is said to inhere in any body of men, be they ecclesiastics or laymen or a mixed board, this is not a Christian, but a Papist or Caesaropapist position, because in the Christian Church God's Word is the only authority and all Christians are and remain responsible directly to God for all they believe and do.⁸

While the Reformers believed that it was unnecessary to accept a different or a new confession of faith as a requirement for basic and permanent concord within the church,⁹ we realize that the time might come when it would be necessary for the

regulations, and to make a judicial decision, to which our congregations would have to submit unconditionally in any matter involving the imposing of something upon them." (Trans. Paul F. Koehneke, *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, XXXIII [April 1960], 13.)

⁷ *Christian Dogmatics*, III (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), 428.

⁸ *Ibid.*, III, 428.

⁹ Solid Declaration, Rule and Norm, p. 503, 1.2.

Lutheran Church to formulate a new confession. It is perhaps conceivable that a critical condition might develop that would force one to draw up such a new confession for new needs in a new day. But this new confession would have to "presuppose and safeguard the doctrinal content of the *Book of Concord*."¹⁰ However, a much more complicated route than the simple adoption of doctrinal statements at a delegate synod would be required.

In most instances where synodical resolutions of a doctrinal nature have been adopted, the intention on the part of most delegates undoubtedly was to preserve the purity of the Gospel. While such an aim is laudable, even the highest intentions of men may lead to disaster. One needs merely to be reminded of the Council of Trent, which stated that the aim of the council was to remove error so that "the purity itself of the Gospel be preserved in the Church." But it was this very council which enacted the great tragedy when it stated that the truth of the Gospel was contained "in written books, and the unwritten traditions which, received by the Apostles from the mouth of Christ Himself, or from the Apostles themselves, the Holy Ghost dictating, have come down even unto us. . . ." ¹¹

When, indeed, synodical statements purportedly of a doctrinal nature deal with issues that are beyond the scope of Scripture (as in the case of exegetical and

¹⁰ Hermann Sasse, "Can the Brief Statement be Elevated to the Rank of a Confession of the Lutheran Church?" unpublished essay, 1962.

¹¹ From the Fourth Session in *The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, trans. J. Waterworth (London: C. Dolman, 1848).

isagogical matters) or if they say something less than Scripture as if they were dealing with an article of faith based on all of Scripture (for example, "A Brief Statement on the Lord's Supper," 21) it is a clear violation of the meaning of submission to Scripture alone when such statements are declared binding on all members. Where the subject matter of a synodical resolution has not even been discussed in the Confessions, the synodical statement obviously cannot be regarded as an elaboration of a doctrine already subscribed to by the Synod.

In cases where synodical resolutions that purportedly deal with doctrinal matters include a proviso stating that they are subject to review and change, it is clear that such resolutions cannot be on a par with the Lutheran Confessions.

One of the first principles of the Lutheran Church is that the Lutheran Confessions are not to be accepted either *quatenus* or with mental reservation. For a Lutheran pastor the Symbols are not open to question. He subscribes to them *quia*, that is, he acknowledges that they are in accord with Scripture. The very fact that the *Brief Statement*, the *Common Confession*, and the scores of other confessional statements may be discussed, and if necessary altered, clearly subordinates them to the Symbols.¹²

¹² Arthur C. Repp, "Scripture, Confessions, and Doctrinal Statements" (*A Symposium of Essays and Addresses Given at the Counselors' Conferences*, Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Ind., Sept. 14—17, 1960), p. 109.

Cleveland, 1962, 3-17 (Resolution 9 and Synodically Adopted Statements); Detroit, 1965, 2-08 (Uphold and Honor the Doctrinal Content of Synodically Adopted Statements), p. 96; and New York, 1967, 2-04, which restated the Cleveland 3-17, p. 88. All references to resolutions are from the appropriate *Proceedings*.

II

THE PRINCIPLE IS UNCONSTITUTIONAL

It is unconstitutional to expand the confessional basis of the Synod by the adoption of doctrinal statements without following the proper channels. In addition to Article II, the Missouri Synod states in Article V that membership in Synod "is held and may be acquired by congregations, ministers of the Gospel, and teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church who confess and accept the confessional basis of Article II." In Article VI, 1, the Constitution says: "Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in Synod are: 1. Acceptance of the confessional basis of Article II."

Article XIV clearly states that "changes in the Constitution and amendments thereto may be made provided they do not conflict with the provisions laid down in Article II and in Article VI." This provision seems to make Article II unalterable.

Attempts have indeed been made within the Synod in recent memory to erode this safeguard. One thinks, for example, of the synodical action that elevated the *Brief Statement* to a par with the Confessions. This occurred in Chicago in 1947, when the Synod unanimously reaffirmed "its loyalty to the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the *Brief Statement*."¹³ This action was repeated at the St. Paul convention in 1956 when the Synod rejected "every interpretation of documents approved by Synod which would be in disagreement with the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the *Brief Statement*."¹⁴

¹³ *Proceedings*, p. 524.

¹⁴ *Proceedings*, p. 546.

The San Francisco convention of 1959 went even farther in eroding Article II. It adopted a recommendation by which the Synod was said to clarify

A. . . . its position by reaffirming that every doctrinal statement of a confessional nature adopted by Synod as a true exposition of the Holy Scriptures is to be regarded as public doctrine (*publica doctrina*) in Synod; and

B. That Synod's pastors, teachers, and professors are held to teach and act in harmony with such statements; and

C. That those who believe that such statements are not satisfactory in part or in their entirety are not to teach contrary to them, but rather are to present their concern to their brethren in the ministry, particularly in conferences, to the appropriate District officials, and if necessary to the synodical officials.¹⁵

This trend was reversed when the convention at Cleveland in 1962 declared the San Francisco resolution unconstitutional "on the ground that said resolution has the effect of amending the confessional basis of the Constitution of the Synod without following the procedure required by Article XIV of the Constitution."¹⁶

When at the same convention a memorial (3-06) was submitted which demanded a literal subscription on the part

¹⁵ *Proceedings*, p. 191.

¹⁶ *Proceedings*, Resolution 6-01, p. 123. Traces of clinging to A Brief Statement as a *quasi* symbol of the Missouri Synod may be seen in the action of the 13 District presidents who issued a pre-Denver statement in 1969 against the proposed fellowship with The American Lutheran Church. They opposed fellowship because: "The Constitution of Synod, Article VI, point 2, and the *Brief Statement* of our Synod have made it obligatory that there be full agreement in doctrine and practice before declaring pulpit and altar fellowship."

of all members to the Brief Statement, the convention declared such a procedure unconstitutional.¹⁷ This same convention (Resolution 3-17) declared: "The Synod regards all statements [doctrinal declarations of the Synod in the past] as standing under the Holy Scriptures and under the Confessions."¹⁸

The Synod has since the Cleveland convention reiterated the position that the doctrinal content of synodically adopted statements is under the norms of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions¹⁹ and on several occasions has reaffirmed its subscription to Article II of the Constitution.²⁰

In response to the Cleveland convention's request that the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) consider the question of the status and use of synodically adopted statements, the Synod responded by saying that it accepted as its own the report on the "Status and Use of Synodically Adopted Doctrinal Statements."²¹

In a discussion on church government Pieper argued:

The only purpose of voting in matters of doctrine is to see whether all now understand the teaching of the divine Word and agree to it; the purpose of the vote is not to decide the correctness of a doctrine by majority vote or even by unani-

¹⁷ Cleveland, *Proceedings*, Resolution 2-14, p. 104.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

¹⁹ Detroit, *Proceedings*, Resolution 2-08, p. 96; 2-12, p. 97; New York, 2-04, p. 88; Denver, 1969, 2-27, p. 91.

²⁰ Detroit *Proceedings*, Resolution 2-09, p. 94; New York, 2-16, p. 92; Denver, 2-03, p. 85.

²¹ New York, *Proceedings*, Resolution 2-04, pp. 88—89.

mous vote. The orthodox Christian Church remains aware of the fact that it cannot by resolution make or give birth to Christian doctrines, but must always merely set forth from Scripture and profess over against the prevailing error the doctrines submitted and settled in Scripture.²²

Thus it is clear that when the church formulates doctrinal statements from time to time to meet specific needs, she does not intend to establish doctrine but to express assent to the teaching of Scriptures.²³

III

THE PRINCIPLE IS CONTRARY TO THE ADVISORY NATURE OF THE SYNOD

Two guiding principles from the Constitution make it amply clear that the Synod is an advisory body, particularly with reference to doctrine and matters of conscience.

Article VII Relation of Synod to Its Members

In its relation to its members Synod is not an ecclesiastical government exercising legislative or coercive powers, and with respect to the individual congregation's right of self-government it is but an advisory body. Accordingly, no resolution of Synod imposing anything upon the individual congregation is of binding force if it is not in accordance with the Word of God or if it appears to be inexpedient as far as the condition of a congregation is concerned.

Concerning resolutions adopted at synodical meetings, the Constitution says in Article VIII, C:

²² *Christian Dogmatics*, III, 430.

²³ See the CTCR report, "What Is a Doctrine?" *Workbook*, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, New York, 1967, p. 51.

All matters of doctrine and of conscience shall be decided only by the Word of God. All other matters shall be decided by a majority vote.

Furthermore, Bylaw 1.09 (b.) says:

The Synod expects every member congregation to respect its resolutions and to consider them a binding force if they are in accordance with the Word of God and if they appear expedient as far as the condition of the congregation is concerned. The Synod, being an advisory body, recognizes the right of the congregation to be the judge of the expediency of the resolution as applied to its local condition. However, in exercising such judgment, a congregation must not act arbitrarily but in accordance with the principles of Christian love and charity.

While this bylaw speaks only of congregations, the Constitution itself in Article V makes no distinction whatever between the relationship of congregations to the Synod and that of individual pastors to it.

Pieper was very clear in his emphasis on the advisory nature of the Synod, especially in doctrinal matters.

But if we ask what authority or power these representatives, these *ecclesiae representativae*, have, the answer is: With respect to the congregation and the individual Christians they always have only advisory power.²⁴

He warned Lutherans against the tendency to make congregational or synodical resolutions binding, maintaining that "this Roman leaven has also penetrated into the Lutheran Church bodies of America and Germany."²⁵

The advisory nature of the Synod is of

²⁴ *Christian Dogmatics*, III, 428.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, III, 432.

special significance to pastors, teachers, and member congregations who are unable to express their convictions on doctrinal statements by vote except through delegates. If synodical statements of a doctrinal nature were binding in the sense that the Scriptures and the Confessions are, all members would be subject to the voting delegates when it came to their own doctrinal stand. Professors and other advisory members would in every instance and at every synodical convention be bound in conscience by the vote of others. Such action, in effect, would make the meaning of their ordination vows change whenever the Synod, by resolution, would add to or limit the scope of the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions.

If resolutions adopted by Synod when assembled in convention only express the conviction of the delegates present at that place and that time, disagreement with such resolutions ought not affect relationships of fellowship. While it is true that synodical conventions have properly pleaded with members to uphold and honor the doctrinal content of synodically adopted statements under the norms of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions,²⁶ it is also true that the Synod has advised its members to view these statements always in their proper light and under established norms. In heeding this plea, members must take into consideration the circumstances which obviously vary from time and place. In these times of rapid communication it will be difficult for brethren to apply the resolutions

of the Synod one way under certain circumstances and another way under different circumstances without creating tensions. If the matter under discussion is really not a doctrine clearly set forth in the Scriptures and confessed in the Symbols, the application of a synodical resolution will require understanding and trust among brethren. It is impossible to demand an unconditional adherence to synodical resolutions of this type, while it is necessary to allow all to employ the Christian freedom which Christians have under the Gospel and in submission to God's will.

IV

THE PRINCIPLE AS STATED IS UNACCEPTABLE BECAUSE IT IS TOO BROAD TO BE MEANINGFUL AND VALID

A. Doctrinal statements accepted by the Synod are *often bound by time and circumstances*.

While this statement is true also of the Lutheran Confessions, it is generally accepted within the Missouri Synod that confessional subscription does not cover "things which do not pertain to doctrine." Included among these items is "the interpretation given in the Symbols to individual scriptural passages" and such matters as the line of argumentation, the authorship of secular books cited in the Confessions, the rules of orthography, and other matters rising out of the time and circumstances of the day.²⁷

The time-bound nature of doctrinal statements adopted by the Synod during its

²⁶ Detroit, *Proceedings*, 1965, Resolution 2-08, p. 96; see also Cleveland, 3-17, p. 106; New York, 2-04, p. 89; Denver, 2-06, p. 86; Detroit, 2-23, p. 99.

²⁷ "Why are the symbolical books . . . to be signed unconditionally?" quoted in Pieper, I, 357.

more than 120 years of existence is evident to anyone who reads some of these statements, especially of the previous century. This is true even of the Brief Statement, which was, in fact, submitted to all pastors and congregations prior to its adoption. That document has some serious shortcomings for our time.²⁸

B. The requirement that all members of the Synod are to accept the doctrinal statements adopted by the Synod is *too broad in scope* to be meaningful. In fact, it is an omnibus statement, for it includes all the statements of the Synod from its very beginning, not only those adopted during the past decade. To our knowledge, no one has even drawn up a list of the doctrinal statements which are still on the books.

C. The *meaning* of "synodical statements of a doctrinal nature" is very much in dispute. What is meant by "doctrinal nature" or "doctrinal matters," especially when these are linked up with the phrase "confessional in nature"?

Time and again isagogical and exegetical questions have been referred to as "doctrinal matters." Such matters as the authorship of the books of the Bible, the interpretation of Genesis 1—2 and other passages of Holy Writ, the historical-critical method (without further explanation of the precise meaning of this method), the

literary form of certain sections of Scripture, the "how" of such miracles as the virgin birth of our Lord, the creation of the world, the inspiration of Scriptures, have all been described as "doctrinal matters." There usually are doctrinal implications in the manner in which one interprets Scripture, and there may be such implications in the way one describes miracles or determines literary form. These are overtones, however, and not necessarily a part of the topic under discussion.

The difficulties involved in this ambiguous phrasing are reflected in the CTCR's review of the question "What Is a Doctrine?" a document adopted at the Denver convention in 1969.²⁹ This document accepted the statement and comments by the two seminary faculties in 1956 as a sound and useful answer to the question "What Is a Doctrine?" That statement reads in part:

A doctrine is an article of faith which the church, in obedience to her Lord, and in response to her specific needs, derives according to sound principles of interpretation from Scripture as the sole source of doctrine and sets forth in a form adapted to teaching.³⁰

Mistaken exegesis of a section of Scripture and incorrect isagogical judgments are not in themselves false doctrine as long as they do not set aside or call into question the authority of Scripture.³¹

The dilemma as to whether certain synodical statements deal with articles of faith can clearly be demonstrated as one care-

²⁸ See "A Brief Statement: Guidelines and Helps for Study," *CONCORDIA THEOLOGICAL MONTHLY*, XXXIII (1962), 210—23; Carl S. Meyer, "The Role of A Brief Statement Since 1952," *ibid.*, 199—209; and [H. Sasse] "Can the Brief Statement be Elevated to the Rank of the Confessions of the Lutheran Church?" unpublished essay of 1962. For other changes in doctrine and practice in the Missouri Synod see "Changes in the Missouri Synod" by Arthur C. Repp, *CTM*, XXXVIII (1967), 458—78.

²⁹ *Proceedings*, Resolution 2-24, p. 90, and printed in the "Supplement" to the New York convention, pp. 19—25.

³⁰ "Supplement," p. 20.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

fully reads the resolution offered to the Detroit convention in 1965. The first Resolved said flatly:

Thus the Scriptures ascribe the Pentateuch and the Book of Isaiah to Moses and Isaiah respectively. The Scriptures do not in so many words ascribe the human authorship exclusively to these men, but neither do they in so many words negate these conclusions.³²

In the final resolve the resolution stated:

In our preaching and teaching we do not bind consciences by saying more than the Scriptures say on these matters, and that, on the other hand, we warn against the use of theories regarding the authorship of Isaiah and the Pentateuch which detract from or nullify the divine authority of these books.³³

³² *Proceedings*, Resolution 2-35, p. 90.

³³ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

On the basis of these reasons the general principle that synodical resolutions of a doctrinal nature are conscience-binding is unacceptable. The confessional basis of the Synod is set forth in Article II of its Constitution, and synodical resolutions can be accepted insofar as they agree with this confessional basis. The plea of delegates of synodical conventions that pastors and professors honor and uphold the doctrinal content of these statements can be honored as far as circumstances, time, and place allow. Where statements are regarded as faulty in their formulation of Scriptural doctrine or where they have other deficiencies, men should study them with their brethren and, where necessary, call them to the attention of the proper committees and commissions of the Synod.

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