

6633 W. WARTBURG CIRCLE

(The Means of Grace and The Lutheran Confessions: COMMON CONFESION)  
 AN INVESTIGATION OF THE COMMON CONFESION'S STATEMENT ON  
 "THE WORD"

In our joint study of the Common Confession it is the present writer's assignment to discuss that document's Article V, "The Means of Grace," more specifically, the section on "The Word." In a treatment of this article, however, several matters must be borne in mind lest we place insufficient emphasis on certain manners of expression, omissions, departures, noticeable in this article, and so our evaluation thereof be but superficial and actually meaningless.

To begin, it is imperative that we bear in mind that our position on the question of inspiration is not just another theory. To be sure there are theories in regard to this matter, theories virtually by the dozen. Although it is hardly likely that anyone among us so labels our position, yet that this is done regarding our position by such outside of our own circles is attested by the fact that the author of the Brief Statement felt compelled to say, "We teach also that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a so-called "theological deduction," but that it is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures." Our teaching most certainly is not the product of human logic and reasoning. The wealth of evidence offered in Scriptures, supporting our stand, is fairly overwhelming. Nor need we long debate about the fact that such testimony of the Scriptures in its own behalf is valid. The Bible is self-authenticating.

A second consideration, important to our investigation, is that of the unusual significance of this particular doctrine. Reflecting on this points/ recalls to our minds the well-known words, "Yea, hath God said?" What, in the final analysis, was the great Deceiver's object with these words? Was he not attempting to arouse doubt regarding what God had said so that he, the "rearing lion," might "deavour" man, deprive him of the blissful relationship with his God?

Undoubtedly because of his singular success herewith, Satan has ever continued with this method. Since that early time God, in His grace, has committed His "oracles," His wonderful council of salvation, to lost and condemned mankind in written form. Yet the Tempter approaches his prey with the same old question, "Yea, hath God said?" "Is this message," he would say, "which you have in your Bible really God's Word, every word of it? Is this Book, which itself admits of human writers, entirely the Truth?" Success here, too, has the same dreadful consequences. Being itself sin, it begets sin. It does, yea, must give birth to all manner of false doctrine and this, of course, "will eat like a canker."

It simply is true, "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" (Ps. 11, 3) If it is correct to say, in the words of the Smalcald Articles, "The Word of God alone shall establish articles of faith, and no one else," then Luther is surely also justified in saying, "If one has fallen away from the purity of the Word (and certainly any erroneous teaching about the Word of God itself is such falling), he will fall from one error into another." Where that fundamental principle is rejected, error not only may, but must result. Should the Bible serve "the Christian Church for the foundation of faith," the foundation itself must first of all be correctly received. Though the doctrine of the Bible's inspiration is in itself not the cardinal doctrine of the Scriptures, no certainty in any other doctrine can be possible where there is any doubt whatsoever regarding the foundation for these doctrines. Error is simply an impossibility if one's attitude ever against the Scriptures is ever

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that of Samuel, "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth." If in reading and studying the Bible, man's ego, his reason, his logic, his will, etc., could be conquered entirely, there would of necessity be perfect agreement with all others doing similarly. As soon as any other source, and be that source part and influence ever so slight, is employed as a source and norm for doctrine, then the way has been paved for "every wind of doctrine," and the old evil foe, with his age-old method has gained another victory. Yes, so all-decisive is this that where error is found in any doctrine, it is, in the final analysis, traceable to some false conception of the foundation of all doctrine.

Very much to the point is a statement of Arthur W. Fink, in his little volume, "The Divine Inspiration of the Bible." "Christianity," he states, "is based upon the impregnable rock of Holy Scriptures. The starting point of all doctrinal discussion must be the Bible. Upon the foundation of the Divine Inspiration of the Bible stands or falls the entire edifice of Christian truth. --- "If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?" Surrender the dogma of verbal inspiration and you are left like a rudderless ship on a stormy sea --- at the mercy of every wind that blows. Deny that the Bible is, without any qualification, the very Word of God, and you are left without any ultimate standard of measure, and without any supreme authority. It is useless to discuss any doctrine taught by the Bible until you are prepared to acknowledge, unreservedly, that the Bible is the final court of appeal."

Pertinent is also a statement of P. E. Kretzmann ("The Foundations Must Stand"): "Among all the doctrines of the Bible there is none that occupies a more critical position than that of the INSPIRATION OF HOLY WRIT. We commonly refer to the doctrine of justification by faith alone as the central doctrine of the Christian religion, the ARTICULUS STANTIS ET CAUSAE ECCLESIAE. But even this fundamental truth of personal faith is not a matter of subjective certainty. It depends rather, as do all other articles of faith, on the objective certainty of the Word of God, as a whole and in all its parts. In this respect the doctrine of the inspiration of the Bible is fundamental for the entire CORPUS DOCTRINAE. If Christians in general, and particularly Christian theologians, preachers, and teachers, cannot be sure of the matters which they present in their teaching, then the Bible will cease to be the one norm of doctrine and rule of life, and Christianity will cease to be the one absolute religion."

Dr. Walther writes, "If the possibility that Scripture contained the least error were admitted, it would become the business of MAN to sift the truth from the error. That places man OVER SCRIPTURE and Scripture is NO LONGER the source and norm of doctrine. Human reason is made the NORMA (primary standard) of truth, and Scripture is degraded to the position of a NORMA NORMATA (secondary standard). The least deviation from the old inspiration doctrine introduces a rationalistic germ into theology and infects the whole body of doctrine."

Surely these thoughts were not foreign to our Saviour when He said, "If ye continue in My Word then are ye My disciples indeed." (Jn 8, 31) Surely the Apostle would have made an idle demand of the Corinthians in saying to them, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment," (I Cor. 1, 10) if he had not known that this is possible only if one source for doctrine is used and if that source be understood in the same way. And does he not reveal this, when later on in the same chapter he shows why any and every other source will simply not suffice?

We have touched upon these matters a little more at length because, in our opinion, anyone who teaches incorrectly on the doctrine of inspiration will also teach falsely elsewhere. Yes, it is our opinion that even when such who here teach incorrectly agree with us on other doctrines, it is actually only an agreement in words; surely the understanding of the doctrine and the attitude over against it cannot be the same. If, therefore, we find that the Common Confession is inadequate in this basic doctrine, then we could say, without further investigation, that the Common Confession simply is unsatisfactory and that the discussion of other doctrines with such who here err will be futile.

A third matter of which we must be fully aware, as a necessary background for our study, is the fact that the doctrine in question has been in controversy between the two bodies involved in the framing of the Common Confession. In thus saying, we realize that this is a point not admitted by all. But is its truth not borne out by the following: The Missouri Synod at its 1950 convention said, by way of resolution, "The Common Confession shall be recognized as a statement of agreement on these doctrines between us and the American Lutheran Church." From the American Lutheran Church came the declaration, "We rejoice that agreement has been obtained therein (CC) regarding doctrines that have been in controversy between our church and the Lutheran Church/ - Missouri Synod." (Witness) *ALC Journal at Columbus 1950*

And can there be any question about this when statements as the following issue from ALC circles: "In Scripture the witness of those who had direct contact with God's revelation is found recorded. Those prophets and apostles wrote their experiences for the sake of the church which should come after them. In other words, Scripture may be regarded as the history of revelation." (Prof. A. A. Jagnow of ALC Sem. at Wartburg, Wicke and Con. Luth. 8/48) "Writers were not inspired so as to speak with scientific precision when they employed their human knowledge of geographical or chronological details in unfolding to unlettered men the revealed truth with which the entire range of human facts was connected .... The Holy Spirit, in making the sacred writers infallible recorders of the hitherto unknown will of God towards men, in no way inspired them to be teachers of astronomy, or geology, or physics. These spheres do not belong to revelation. No number of contradictions that could be gathered within these spheres, would in the least shake our confidence in the absolute authority of Holy Scriptures as the infallible test of theological truth, an inerrant guide in all matters of faith and practice." (Dr. Mattes of ALC quoting Dr. H. E. Jacobs of ULC, Wicke)

Nor is this difference one only of recent vintage. In 1909, in Grosze "Unterscheidungslehren," under the initials F. P., (p.49) speaking of the difference between Missouri and Iowa on the analogy of faith and referring to a statement on which Dr. Stelhorn claimed there was agreement, namely, "The Holy Scripture is the only source of Christian doctrine," we read, (trans. mine) "In consequence we are also essentially at variance in the following statements: '1. The Holy Scripture is the only source of Christian doctrine.' The Synodical Conference and the Norwegian Synod understand this sentence as it reads. The Synods of Iowa and Ohio restrict this sentence to this meaning: Only so much is to be taken as doctrine from Scripture as fits into the connection to be set forth by the theologians."

In the opinion of the writer, however, the difference on this question antedates even this by many years, yes, dates back to the very founding of the Iowa Synod. Carl Manthey Zorn ("Questions on Christian Topics) writes: "The Iowa Synod was founded in 1854 in opposition to the Missouri Synod, because the Missouri Synod showed a determination to abide by the Word of

God and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church." Iowa's position on the matter of Open Questions reveals that its attitude ever against Holy Scriptures at that early date was radically different from that of the Missouri Synod, as Prof. Meyer wrote in the "Quartalschrift" (4/50), "One of the chief purposes for organizing the Iowa Synod was to create a body in which divergent theological opinions on certain Biblical doctrines might enjoy equal rights, and would not be condemned as divisive of church fellowship. Those holding non-conforming views were to possess all rights as members in good standing." And have we not in the course of years, in connection with this very doctrine, witnessed enough to convince us that a radical difference must have existed? The Iowa Synod has, e.g., contended that whatever is not fixed symbolically by the church is an Open Question, that on certain doctrines conflicting opinions may be taught because Scriptures are not sufficiently clear, that the doctrines in dispute between the Missouri Synod and Iowa are chiefly found in the more or less obscure texts of Scriptures, that inerrancy can be claimed only for those parts of Scriptures which deal with matters of faith and life, that the "analogy of faith is a recognizable, harmonious whole, or system" which overrules the formulation of all individual doctrines." Is this not also clear from the fact that the Ohio Synod at the time of the founding of the American Lutheran Church was forced to accept Iowa's position regarding Scriptures? Yes, is this not further borne out by the fact that the Pittsburgh Agreement, which is a denial of Verbal Inspiration, was drawn up by the ALC with the United Lutheran Church?

Certainly there have been differences all through the years. And these are serious, basic differences. All through these years Iowa's guiding principle has been that expressed in the Sandusky Agreement of 1868, "that it is neither necessary nor possible to agree in all non-fundamental doctrines," and repeated, only in different phraseology, in the Friendly Invitation of 1947, namely, that there is an "area where there exists an allowable and wholesome latitude of theological opinion on the basis of the teachings of the Word of God." It is finally this difference which has caused the ALC to feel that it occupies a "middle-of-the-road" position that avoids the mistakes and exaggerations of both the extreme right and the extreme left in American Lutheranism, and, by virtue of this very fact, must certainly be divinely ordained to be the 'mediating link' that will bring left and right together with ourselves as the center of gravity (Luth. Loyalty, first issue) How easy, in view of this, to understand Iowa's policies and practices, both as a separate body and now together with others in the ALC!

Finally it will also be pertinent to our present investigation to note ALC's attitude ever against the Brief Statement. Though we have never officially subscribed to the Brief Statement, we have repeatedly voiced our complete agreement therewith and have given testimony to this fact by our continued affiliation with the Missouri Synod in the Synodical Conference. The ALC's attitude toward the Brief Statement, and so also toward that document's article on the Word, is well known. Although it has never, at least without some qualification, endorsed the Brief Statement, yea, although it even rejected the Doctrinal Affirmation, which was somewhat of a relaxing of the strong position of the Brief Statement, it strikes us with what joy it greeted the Common Confession and with what readiness it gave its approval thereto.

Having these several facts in mind and realizing therefrom that a most careful scrutiny is indicated, we now proceed to the actual investigation of the Common Confession's statement on "The Word." In view of these facts, and realizing the importance of any confession of faith, particu-

Early one aimed to settle long-existing differences, we ask ourselves: Does the Common Confession reject any and all errors in this doctrine which have existed in ALC circles? Does it express the correct doctrine of the Word, and does it do this in language which is unambiguous and absolutely clear? Can we say that this article, even if in somewhat different form and language, is essentially the same as that of the Brief Statement? Can we now say that finally it is true that both parties to the Common Confession accept in absolutely the identical sense the statement: The Holy Scripture is the only source of Christian doctrine? Yes, does this article guarantee that the bodies involved now have the same starting point in discussing other differences so that there can be hope that agreement is at least within the realms of possibility?

Though, in studying this article, we find much that is well said, we must state that the general impression created thereby does not satisfy. Our investigation compels us to state that already so far as confessional make-up is concerned this article reveals several serious and glaring weaknesses. Even though, on the basis of these findings alone, we would possibly not reject the article, yet, in view of past history, even this causes us to wonder about its adequacy.

We feel such a weakness is the very position which itself it is this article occupies in the document. Now it is true, all the systems employed in presenting Christian doctrine are man-made, and, therefore, in themselves of little consequence where any given doctrine is placed. Yet when one considers that this doctrine of the Word is basic for all doctrine, it would seem that even its place in a confession, ~~where a treatment of it is necessary,~~ should witness this fact. In the Brief Statement it does occupy this, we may say, most natural position. All the more reason, we feel, to wonder why the same body which recognized its importance by placing it first in its own confession should in the Common Confession allow it to be ~~relegated~~ relegated to a far less prominent position by bringing it in Article No. V.

But the very fact that it is found in Article No. V brings us to another consideration. Article V bears the heading "Means of Grace." And it is here, as a subdivision, that the statement of the Word is found. So this important doctrine is not even accorded the honor of being treated as a separate article. That weakness, however, becomes the more serious when we consider the fact that such who contend that the Bible merely contains the Word of God like to thus treat this doctrine. In doing so a division may be made between those matters having to do with faith and life from those that do not, in other words, it helps to protect an error. We do not want to judge whether any framer of the Common Confession had that in mind, in fact, in charity we assume that such was not the case, but nevertheless, considering what has been noted, already the position of the doctrine of the Word in the Common Confession appears to us as a serious weakness.

Another matter that immediately catches the eye and also appears like a weakness of no little significance is the manner, rather strange to our circles, of employing Scripture proof-texts. We note how specific the Brief Statement is in its use of such passages; immediately following the truth expressed stands the proof-text, and the exact statement, proving the point in question, is quoted, down to the very verse or verses. How different the Common Confession! Proof-texts are grouped at the end of the article, without any indication which point is to be established by any given passage. Yes, more, the texts are not nearly so specific as those, e.g., of the Brief Statement. We are referred to longer sections or entire chapters. This we deem a weakness regardless of any particular cause for it. It becomes a

rather serious weakness, however, when we remember that a so-called "totality of Scriptures" was taught in ALC circles and has never been rejected. It is altogether in line with such a teaching, which depends on the spirit and sense of portions of the Bible rather than on the very words that there be a certain vagueness and indefiniteness about its use of proof-texts. For one the Verbal Inspiration of Scriptures is denied and one operates with a harmonious whole or system set forth by man, even though that be a theologian, one dare hardly point to definite places and words and say, "Thus it is written." Again, without casting any reflection on its authors, we feel we are here confronted with a rather glaring shortcoming.

A third item which must, to say the least, especially under the circumstances, be regarded as a deficiency of no small proportions is the complete omission of all rejection of error. We need not here dwell at great length on the fact that it is neither un-Christian nor un-Lutheran to call attention to error and to label error for what it actually is. In so doing, rather than thereby showing a lack of Christian charity, this is a true exhibition of this noble Christian virtue, both over against the erring as well as those to be protected against error. We consider it altogether fitting, e.g., that the Brief Statement refers to and unconditionally condemns certain errors pertinent for its consideration. From what has been said, there certainly can be no question about this that a treatment of and rejection of error was in place in the article before us. We feel constrained, therefore, to call this omission a serious weakness.

Finally, it would seem to be a rather apparent and not inconsequential weakness that the significant term Verbal Inspiration has been yielded. It is of course true that it is the content of the doctrine rather than its name that is of prime importance. When, however, the very term was obviously under fire as to its correctness, because the content of the doctrine was not viewed in the same way, then it would seem that, under such circumstances, even the sacrificing of the term is at best of questionable wisdom. Nor does it meet with very sympathetic ears when, in defense of this yielding, it is contended that wisdom dictated this sacrifice because by some the term Verbal Inspiration is associated with a dictation theory. We believe that this very questionable "gain" cannot compensate for the loss incurred.

Not only weaknesses, however, are revealed by our investigation. We also find no small amount of ambiguity which can easily serve as a shelter for former erroneous teaching. In since we are now not dealing with just some chance statement, but with a confession intended to bring into closer relationship two bodies who were at variance with one another also on this point, language which allows of a twofold interpretation is hardly tolerable. It must be clear; the statements unequivocal. It can hardly be considered adequate if it is possible to read both sides of the dispute into it.

Such a situation, we feel, confronts us already in the very first sentence. We read: "Through the Holy Scriptures, which God caused to be written by men chosen and inspired by Him." We realize, of course, that it is not incorrect to speak of inspired men, but this is not the type of inspiration we deal with in this doctrine. Rather this inspiration is something unique, never duplicated in all history. We here have to do with an inspiration of words, as Paul writes (II Tim. 3,16), "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God," and again (I Cor. 2,13) "which things we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." Scriptures consist not of inspired men, but of inspired words. Exactly that is the reason why Jesus can say, and say

of a matter in itself certainly of lesser significance, "The Scriptures cannot be broken." (Jn 10/4, 35). Nay, the penmen, who they were and what they were being of little consequence, were soon to pass away, the words they wrote as the instruments of God were not to pass away.

Placing the emphasis on inspired men can easily shield a false idea prevalent in some Lutheran circles, namely, that the men employed were co-authors, that there was a "unique cooperation" between the penmen and God in producing the Bible. But such a contention makes of the Bible a human divine book, if not a human book entirely. Then room is made for the human element in Scriptures, and, as M. Tweeten states, "If inspiration does not exclude the personal action of the sacred writers, no more does it destroy all influences of human imperfection." Since the ALC has in the Pittsburgh Agreement become party to this way of speaking, we believe the expression "inspired men" fairly compels a twofold interpretation, one expressing what we mean in a rather unsatisfactory way, another expressing what errorists mean herewith as set forth by Dr. Stump of the ILC, "They are inspired words because they are the words of inspired men," thereby making the doctrine of inspiration a theological deduction.

Ambiguity, and we feel speaking thus is being charitable, is also contained in the much-discussed statement, "Since the Holy Spirit by divine inspiration supplied to the holy writers content and fitting word." To be sure the unwary reader, not having any knowledge of the historical background, can understand this correctly, namely, as a statement of Verbal Inspiration. On the other hand, such who claim that the Bible merely contains the Word of God will also be quite well satisfied with such phraseology. Whether it is intentional or not, there is every reason to wonder whether this expression is not to serve as a shelter for error. The statement is almost identical with that found in the Pittsburgh Agreement; the document of agreement between the ULC and the ALC. Now what did the framers of that expression mean therewith? Dr. Knubel of the ULC made it rather clear that, in the understanding of his body, it is not intended to teach Verbal Inspiration. The ALC assured the ULC officially that this statement was "not an acceptance of the Verbal Inspiration doctrine." (Lutheran 4/50) The expression is for some, therefore, a positive denial of Verbal Inspiration. Because of this the Missouri Synod in 1939 declared this way of expression inadequate and especially ~~was~~ for that reason broke off relations with the committee of the ULC.

When now this expression, rather than the accepted Lutheran terminology Verbal Inspiration, appears in the Common Confession, one has every reason to contend that it is certainly not a clear-cut testimony to the true Verbal Inspiration doctrine. It surely can give no assurance that the ALC has rejected its position of the Pittsburgh Agreement and accepted that of the Brief Statement.

In this same sentence, however, another matter should be noted. The expression in question reads "content and fitting word." "Word" is in the singular, and not accidentally. Such in the ALC who reject a Verbal Inspiration of the Scriptures maintain that they would never have accepted the Common Confession if the plural had been used, for that would have confessed Verbal Inspiration which they reject. So this singular form, too, is at best an ambiguous statement and in view of circumstances ~~is~~ entirely inadequate.

But more that in our opinion is unsatisfactory is to be found in the portion discussed. We have in mind the expression "in their entirety." We, of course, know that a so-called "totality of Scriptures" was current in ALC circles and has never been rejected. This, however, is nothing more than that it

than a man-made system, a harmonious connection, which for them constitutes the analogy of faith and stands as the highest norm of Scripture interpretation. We must also remember how conveniently this idea of a totality of Scriptures has been employed to bridge gaps which the human mind simply is not capable of bridging and which man has not the least right to even attempt to bridge. When we thus see that in consequence of such a man-made system not the inspired words themselves speak but rather the theologians' understanding of them and the general sense he may draw from them, then we can see why Dr. F. Pieper spoke so sharply against this, saying, "If anything were ever human imagination, and the very opposite of Scripture, it is this 'whole of Scripture' which was invented by Schleiermacher, and was introduced into the modern Lutheran so-called theology through the influence of Hofmann. This 'whole of Scripture' lies altogether outside the Scriptures. It is a product of the imagination that Christian doctrine must be a whole or system in the sense of human reason, or human understanding, according to which the individual doctrines of Scripture are to be understood or fitted as to a standard. It is clear that all Christian truth by this method of exegesis is ridiculed, and that all Scripture thereby is reduced to a waste heap of ruins. Even the modern theologians admit that Schleiermacher, by means of this 'whole of Scripture', has cast over-board the whole Christian doctrine. But even in the case of Hofmann the result has become apparent that he denies such fundamental teachings as the inspiration of Scripture, the vicarious satisfaction, hereditary sin, etc., and thereby as a consequence the whole of Christian doctrine, even though he personally may not have drawn this conclusion. In short, through the explanation of Scripture by the slogan 'the whole of Scripture', the Bible is no more its own light, but the 'whole of Scripture' which Schleiermacher, Hofmann and others call forth out of their own minds is made their light instead." The appearance of this expression in the Common Confession, therefore, rightly to say that it adds greatly to the inadequacy of the document.

The second paragraph of this article sounds very fine and would be rather commendable were it not again for the background which dare not be overlooked. It reads: "We therefore recognize the Holy Scriptures as God's inerrant Word, and this Word of God alone shall establish articles of faith. We pledge ourselves to teach all things taught in the Holy Scriptures, and nothing but that which is taught us by God in the Holy Scriptures." When one considers the restriction placed upon the inerrancy of the Bible by the ALC, namely, that it is inerrant only in matters of faith and life, not necessarily, however, "in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters," and again, when one considers that such who teach that the Bible merely contains the Word of God limit the phrase "taught by God" to just certain portions of Scriptures, then such statements, too, are confessionally meaningless. They truly appear more like a compromise than a confession.

Finally our investigation reveals that this article contains a misleading presentation of what constitutes the Means of Grace. The last paragraph of this section on "The Word" introduces the Law. Needless to say, when speaking of the Means of Grace, a treatment of the Law is entirely out of place. In our circles it is never thus treated. In the ALC, however, this is not rare for, as Iowa of old contended, and as it was carried over into the ALC, "the Law temporarily brings to a halt man's natural resistance and places him in a momentary condition of passivity." If, as they hold, the Gospel is at that moment brought to him and he does not add to his natural resistance a wilful resistance, then the Holy Spirit through the Gospel brings him to faith and thus converts him. (Con. Luth. 2/51 p/16) This introduction of the Law in the treatment of the Means of Grace, therefore, renders this third paragraph in-



Such are the matters in this article which we believe must be carefully noted. To recapitulate: Our investigation of this article reveals that it contains:

1. Serious weaknesses so far as confessional make-up is concerned,
2. Ambiguous language, affording a shelter for former erroneous teachings, and
3. A misleading presentation of what constitutes the Means of Grace.

Since, accordingly, this article, in our opinion, makes room for those who deny Verbal Inspiration and thus allows error to stand side by side with the truth, rather than that it rejects error unconditionally, and since this article, therefore, is not an unmistakably clear and unequivocal presentation of this fundamental doctrine, as a confession basic for the intended church union would demand, we feel compelled to declare that it is in reality no confession at all and that we deem it impossible to grant our subscription to it or in any way to become a partner thereto.

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Note: This essay was read at the 1951 Wisconsin Synod Convention. It is the first in a series of six delivered on the "Common Confession".