



WE WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUBSCRIBE
TO THE
LUTHERAN BOOK OF CONCORD

II. ...AS BELIEVERS WHO MUST OPPOSE ALL ERROR

Churches in the world of today are divided by two mutually exclusive bases. The orthodox (true) Christian Churches believe that all religious doctrine is revealed to man by God. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him; but God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit," (I Cor. 2:9.10). The heterodox (false) churches assume that man has the right and duty to determine, interpret, and invent the religious doctrine he wants to believe. Man attributes that self-determined doctrine to the mouth of God to make it appear divine. "Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith," (Jer. 23:31). Orthodox Christians believe, teach, and confess that the revealed Word from God is absolute truth. "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth," (John 17:17). The heterodox church members teach and confess (as God's words) only that which is pleasing and acceptable to their reason. They deny God's truth, but believe fables. "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables," (II Tim. 4:3.4). Orthodox Christians must ever be on guard against all error. "... that we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive," (Eph. 4:14). The true believer has life alone in God's truth, without it he dies! "... to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life," (John 6:68).

Over against the eternal, absolute truth from God stands error, false doctrine. False doctrine is every teaching contrary to the Word of God. Scripture warns against error: "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; he is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself," (I Tim. 6:3-5). The Scripture also calls false doctrine a "... strong delusion, that they should believe a lie," (II Thess. 2:11). The power of delusion lies with Satan, the father of lies, the inventor of all false doctrine. He is "... that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world," (Rev. 12:9). Therefore God calls all His children to be on guard and to fight the good fight of faith. "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: whom resist steadfast in the faith...", (I Peter 5:8.9).

We have the example of the prophets, of Christ, and of the apostles who opposed error. Ezekiel of Old Testament time proclaimed by the command of the Lord: "Her priests have violated my law and have profaned mine holy things:

they have put no difference between the holy and profane ... and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them," (Ezek. 22:26). Jeremiah by inspiration laments the lamentation of God: "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof," (Jer. 5:30.31).

Jesus named, corrected, and renounced the errorists in the church of His day. The Sadducees denied among other doctrines, the resurrection of the dead. Jesus rebuked them: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures," (Matt. 22:29). The Pharisees taught, in addition to many other errors, that their traditions were above divine Law. Jesus exposed their false teaching by a quote from the prophet Isaiah: "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. For laying aside the commandment of God, ye hold the tradition of men," (Mark 7:7.8). Jesus called them "hypocrites" and warned the people of the "heaven" of the Pharisees and the Scribes --- thereby mentioning the errorists by name and declaring error to be a most dangerous, pernicious, and permeating evil that ruins faith and destroys souls.

The apostles of New Testament time also opposed false doctrine. At an apostolic convention Peter testified: "Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear," (Acts 15:10). Paul boldly opposed the errorists in his letter to the Galatians 1:7.8, "... there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." And recall how the Apostle Paul avoided any compromising dialogue with errorists: "And that because of false brethren unawares brought in, who came in privily to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that they might bring us into bondage: to whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you," (Gal. 2:4.5). In the Epistles of James, John, Jude, Peter, and in the Epistle to the Hebrews we find a similar zeal and faithfulness in opposing all error. There is no place in Christian faith for compromising the truth from God!

The called servants of God since the time of the prophets, Christ, and the apostles have also been call-bound to proclaim to man, woman, and child God's revealed truth. "Preach the word," (II Tim. 4:2). "Preach the gospel," (Mark 16:15). "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," (Matt. 28:20). "He that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully," (Jer. 23:28). The called ministers of God are also bound to use the Word from God to refute, to oppose error. Paul speaks of called servants of the Word when he admonishes Titus: "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake," (Titus 1:9-11). Pastor David Lau has developed this subject in the last part of this series of essays on the Lutheran Book of Concord. Let it suffice to say here that like Christ, every faithful pastor and teacher should be able to say at the close of his ministry: "I have given them Thy Word," (John 17:14).

Even as the prophets, the Savior, the apostles, the called pastors and teachers of the Church teach God's truth and oppose error, so every child of God will cling to God's Word, will oppose error, and will avoid religious fellowship with errorists. God's children are to avoid false doctrine. God states this most clearly wherever He exhorts us to abide in the truth, His truth. "But continue thou in the things

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which thou hast learned and hast been assured of," (II Tim. 3:14). "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," (John 8:31,32). Continuing in God's truth and opposing error means that the believers cannot fellowship with those who believe, teach, or confess otherwise than God's Word teaches.

Truth and error cannot fellowship each other; neither can the children of truth and the children of deception. To give the appearance of indifference to error, or to let error stand along side of the truth as if they were compatible, is indeed sinful unionism. It gives the appearance of oneness, when in fact there is a division. How can the child of God walk together in fellowship with one whom he must condemn as an errorist? God has given the rule: "Mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them, for they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly. And by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple," (Rom. 16:17,18). God continues to counsel His children: "If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds," (II John 10,11). "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received from us," (II Thess. 3:6). "A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject," (Titus 3:10). These terms of Holy Scripture: "avoid them," "shun," "receive not," "withdraw," reduced to terms of our day mean that we are to refuse to practice church fellowship with those who have departed from the truth of God.

Let us now apply these God given directives to the early history of the Lutheran Church. The church on earth by Luther's time had suffered much from the doctrines and the leadership of men. Reformers between the time of the apostles and Luther had been silenced for the most part by violent means. The church thrived politically and financially under one pope after another. Absolute rule and divine authority as "Christ's vicar on earth" gave way to doctrines and traditions made by men, yet declared necessary unto salvation.

As concern for the outward glory of the church became more and more intense, the material means for obtaining funds for such glory became more and more urgent. At the time of Luther, Pope Leo X became desperate in his greed for fantastic sums of money in order to keep the church at large in her glory, and in particular to renovate the great St. Peter's Cathedral. His solution of the problem was found in the selling of indulgences --- certificates assuring men of the forgiveness of sins in proportion to the amount of money given to the church. Luther, a Wittenberg professor and preacher became more and more worried about this practice. He came to discover that the people felt no need to be concerned about the Scripture teaching: He who does not believe shall be condemned. As long as a man could hold in his hand a receipt from Christ's vicar on earth that his sins were forgiven, who needed to worry about, or pay attention to Luther's "Scriptures"?

As we know, on the evening before All Saints Day, October 31, 1517, Luther made clear his objections to the practice of selling indulgences. He posted, for the purpose of debate, his formal statements (theses) regarding indulgences --- ninety-five theses in all. In a short time these became known far and wide, and Rome was determined to dampen the zeal of this Wittenberg church worker who, in effect, was robbing the pope's treasury of its forgiveness-for-sale receipts. Martin Luther, as the prophets, Christ, the apostles, and as faithful children of God in all ages, had witnessed the truth of God, and opposed error.

In Rome's attempt to silence Luther, that costly voice of opposition, the Emperor invited Luther to meet with the pope's representatives at Worms. At that meeting the papal representative immediately demanded nothing more of Luther (and nothing less) than that he promptly renounce and retract his theses against the indulgences. To this demand Luther replied that he could not do that unless the pope could prove to him from God's Word that he was wrong. Luther proclaimed to the assembly his firm stand upon the truth of God, and prayed God for the faith so to stand. Once again, as faithful children of God had done in every age, Luther simply declared God's Word, boldly opposed the error contrary to that Word, and let come what may. Luther was declared by Rome to be an outcast, an enemy of the Church --- he could be killed at any time, his life was in danger ... no, his life was eternally secure! For he clung in simple faith to the God revealed truth: The just shall live by faith. He spent his temporary years on earth opposing every error against this saving truth from God.

After the open break with Rome, Luther and those who, with him, recognized God's truth against the Church's errors continued to strengthen one another by searching the Scriptures. Prayerfully, they made bold confessions against one error after another: against Rome, against the errors of other reformers, and against errors which Satan very promptly seeded within the ranks of the young Lutheran Church.

Mr. Marlin Beekman, in the first part of this series of essays on the Lutheran Book of Concord, presented to us a fine historical review of these struggles and victories of faith. Based upon that review, let us now recall the several errors opposed by the confessions gathered in the Lutheran Book of Concord.

THE LARGE AND SMALL CATECHISMS. These works of Martin Luther were not confessional writings directed against a particular doctrinal error. The need for these catechisms arose because of the superstition so common among the church members, and because of the religious ignorance and immorality of both the clergy and laity. Superstition, of course, is doctrinal error against the first table of the Law. Ignorance of God's truth and immorality are doctrinal errors against God's Law and Gospel. In love for these wretched souls, Luther prepared two catechisms; the one for children and parents, the other chiefly for pastors and teachers. By these works, the truth of God was taught and confessed; and the errors of superstition, ignorance, and immorality were rejected.

THE CREEDS. The Apostle's Creed, to our best knowledge, was not drawn up as a final word of truth, and a rejection of error in connection with a particular confessional problem in the Church. This confession of faith "grew" out of the need for a short summary of the faith to be used for purposes of instruction, as well as a confession of the faith for candidates for Holy Baptism. It remains in the Church as a most beautiful summary of Christian doctrine --- a short, but clear statement. By it the faith was guarded against errors of doctrine and practice.

The Nicene Creed of the year 325 grew out of the immediate necessity for safeguarding the apostolic teaching concerning the deity of Christ against the Arian heresy. Arius was a Presbyter of Alexandria who denied the co-essentiality and the co-eternity of the second person of the Trinity with God the Father. He made the second person a philosophical figure, a fiction. In 381 the Creed was enlarged by extending the confession concerning the Holy Spirit. This was done against the error of those who followed Macedonius, who taught that the Holy Ghost was a mere creature, inferior to the Son. This was also known as the Pneumatomachian error,

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adversaries of the Holy Spirit. In 589 the third council of Toledo added the words "and the Son," in Latin, filioque. This guarded against the error that the Spirit proceeded from the Father only.

The Athanasian Creed owes only its name, not its authorship to Athanasius, the "Father of Orthodoxy." This confession of faith sums up in terse theses and antitheses (positive and negative declarations) the doctrine of the Trinity, rejecting all shades of variation in doctrine concerning the Triune God.

We note that the General Creeds of the Church (Ecumenical Creeds) make a clear and forthright confession of God's truth concerning Himself, and at the same time they reject every error not consistent with God's revelation concerning Himself. Without the error-free doctrine of the Holy Trinity the First Commandment would have to remain an impossible mystery.

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION AND THE APOLOGY (DEFENSE). These are the first two specific confessions of the Lutheran Church. The meeting at Augsburg was called by Charles V to adjust religious matters in Germany, a situation which had cracked wide open at the Protest of Spires in 1529. That Protest was against the fact that Charles V revoked the 1526 Diet of Spires which allowed Lutherans to practice their faith. He attempted instead, to enforce the edict of Worms of 1521. The Confession prepared by the Lutherans for the Augsburg Conference contained twenty-one Articles of Faith, and seven Articles Concerning Abuses. The following theses of correct doctrine were confessed, and opposing errors rejected.

"Our Churches with common consent do teach":

1. OF GOD: Condemning all heresies of the Manichaeans (who taught the principle of good and evil); the Valentians (a gnostic philosopher who taught the pagan concepts of the ideal man, ideal church, ideal Christ, and redemption as a cosmic process); the Arians; the Eunomians (Eunomius was a radical Arian); and the Mohammedans. This article also condemned the dynamic Arians known as the Samosatenes who contended that there was but one person, that the "Word" signified a spoken word, and that "Spirit" signified motion in created things.

2. OF ORIGINAL SIN: Condemning the errors of Pelagius who denied original depravity as sin, arguing that man can be justified before God by his own strength and reason.

3. OF THE SON OF GOD: Rejecting all errors not honoring the Son as the Word (*Logos*), denoting the generation of the Son from the Father.

4. OF JUSTIFICATION: Against the Roman error of reversing the order of justification and sanctification, making justification a result of sanctification, denying the declaratory act of justification.

5. OF THE MINISTRY: Condemning the errors of the Anabaptists and others who held that the Holy Ghost comes to men without the external Word of God. Also rejecting the errors of Enthusiasm (Schwaermer) and Calvinism.

6. OF NEW OBEDIENCE: Rejecting all teachings which rely upon works to merit justification before God.

7. OF THE CHURCH: Rejecting the error that for unity in the Church it is necessary to agree upon human traditions such as rites and ceremonies.

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8. WHAT THE CHURCH IS: Condemning the errors of the Reformed and Anabaptists; also rejecting the errors of the Donatists who held that only absolute purity of members and clergy through strict discipline allowed for the ministry of men in the Church.

9. OF BAPTISM: Rejecting the error of the Anabaptists who believed that children were saved without baptism.

10. THE LORD'S SUPPER: Condemning the teachings of all who hold otherwise than the words of Scripture concerning this Sacrament. Rejecting Calvinistic errors which deny the real presence in the Sacrament.

11. OF CONFESSION: Against the false practice of demanding that the confessor must enumerate all sins.

12. OF REPENTANCE: Rejecting the error of the Anabaptists who denied that those once justified could lose the Holy Spirit. Also rejected the error of perfectionism in this life. Also condemned the Novatians (Novatius taught severe rigorism --- God may pardon the fallen, but the church had no right to reinstate them to fellowship).

13. USE OF THE SACRAMENTS: Condemning those who teach that the Sacraments justify through the mere outward act, that faith is not required (against the Romanists and the Calvinists).

14. OF ECCLESIASTICAL ORDER: Against the Anabaptists' disregard of the regular "call" to teach publically (Gemeinschaftswegen) in the Church.

15. OF ECCLESIASTICAL USAGES: Rejecting the Roman use of human traditions, rites and ceremonies, as necessary to salvation.

16. OF CIVIL AFFAIRS: Rejecting the Anabaptist error that forbade civil offices to Christians. Also against the Roman error of Church over State, and the error of teaching Christian perfectionism by forsaking worldly offices.

17. OF CHRIST'S RETURN TO JUDGMENT: Condemning the Anabaptists who taught an end of the punishment of condemned men and devils. Also against the error that before the resurrection of the dead, the godly will take possession of the kingdom of the world (Jewish tradition).

18. OF FREE WILL: Against the Pelagians and others who teach that without the Holy Ghost we are able to love God above all things.

19. OF THE CAUSE OF SIN: Condemning the error of blaming God for being the cause of sin.

20. OF GOOD WORKS: Rejecting the false accusation that the Lutherans forbade good works. Opposed the Roman doctrine that good works justify and save.

21. OF THE WORSHIP OF SAINTS: Rejecting the error of the invocation of (praying to) the saints.

In the remaining articles of the Augsburg Confession the Lutherans reviewed the abuses which they had corrected in the Church. These so-called "abuses" were based upon and/or resulted in errors. "... it is evident that any custom introduced against the commandments of God is not to be allowed," (Triglot 61:9). The

following errors were rejected and corrections were made by the use of clear Scripture passages.

22. OF BOTH KINDS IN THE SACRAMENT: Rejecting the error of withholding the cup, distributing bread alone.

23. OF THE MARRIAGE OF PRIESTS: Condemning the papal command for celibacy of the clergy, against God's Word.

24. OF THE MASS: Condemning the ungodly nature of the Roman Mass, a perversion of the institution of the Lord's Supper. The Mass was also celebrated for the dead in purgatory. In the private Mass there was the misuse of prayer, and the celebration of it for lucre's sake. The Roman error was condemned, that Christ in His passion made satisfaction for original sin, and instituted the Mass wherein an offering should be made for daily sins, venial and mortal. (See Triglot 67:21).

25. OF CONFESSION: The Roman confession was condemned, for by it "satisfactions were extolled; of faith and the merit of Christ and the righteousness of faith no mention was made," (Triglot 69:5). This article also rejected the Roman insistence on the enumeration of sins.

26. OF THE DISTINCTION OF MEATS: Rejecting the Roman doctrine that the distinction of meats merits salvation, thus destroying the Gospel. This practice obscured the doctrine of salvation alone by grace, obscured the doctrine of the divine Law, and troubled the consciences of the people, who could never be sure of forgiveness and salvation.

27. OF MONASTIC VOWS: This article rejected the Roman monastic system with its pagan work-righteousness. In its doctrine of perfectionism reaching toward greater merit before God, many laws and vows had been invented. Among them the vow of celibacy.

28. OF ECCLESIASTICAL POWER: This article condemned the Roman doctrine that the bishops have power in both church and state. It rejected the power of the pope to rule heaven and hell by his claim as the divine head; and it rejected the power of the pope to rule the state by his control of political powers. The article also condemned the use of ecclesiastical power to establish ceremonies to merit grace and at the same time to burden consciences. The article concluded: "These errors crept into the Church when the righteousness of faith was not taught clearly enough," (Triglot 93:62).

THE APOLOGY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION: After the presentation of the Lutheran Confession at Augsburg, the papists countered with a "Confutation," a document which had no arguments, no Scripture, only vilifications. Melanchthon and others wrote an Apology against the false accusations of the Confutation. The timid Melanchthon was inclined to make concessions, but bolstered up by Luther (from the Coburg) and by the laymen involved, a thorough defense and explanation of the Augsburg Confession was prepared and adopted. Its excellent defense is headed by the prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, it is Thy Holy Gospel, it is Thy cause; look Thou upon the many troubled hearts and consciences, and maintain and strengthen in Thy truth Thy churches and little flocks, who suffer anxiety and distress from the devil. Confound all hypocrisy and lies, and grant peace and unity, so that Thy glory may advance, and Thy kingdom, strong against all the gates of hell, may continually grow and increase," (Triglot 103). At the conclusion of this fine defense of the truth of God, the Apology appends as it were a P.S. and confesses: "... but since our opponents would not tolerate the truth,

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and dared to promote manifest errors by force, it is easy to judge who is guilty of scism. Surely all the world, all wisdom, all power ought to yield to Christ and His Holy Word. But the devil is the enemy of God, and therefore rouses all his might against Christ, to extinguish and suppress the Word of God. Therefore, the devil with his members, setting himself against the Word of God, is the cause of the scism and want of unity. For we have most zealously sought peace, and still more eagerly desire it, provided only that we are not forced to blaspheme and deny Christ. For God, the discernor of all men's hearts, is our witness that we do not delight and have no joy in this awful disunion. On the other hand, our adversaries have so far not been willing to conclude peace without stipulating that we must abandon the saving doctrine of the forgiveness of sins by Christ without our merit, though Christ would be most foully blasphemed thereby ... accordingly, we pray God to extend His grace to the end that His holy Gospel may be known and honored by all, for His glory, and for the peace, unity, and salvation of all of us. Regarding all these articles we offer to make further statements if required," (Triglott 451).

THE SMALCALD ARTICLES: Pope Paul III on June 4, 1536, called a general council to meet at Mantua on May 8, 1537. But he called it for the express purpose of "the utter extirpation of the poisonous pestilential Lutheran heresy." Luther was asked by Elector John Frederick of Saxony to write an ultimatum to be considered by the Estates when meeting at Smalcald in February. In these Smalcald Articles, the first part briefly treated a matter not in dispute --- "The High Articles of Divine Majesty." The second part treated the articles that "pertain to the office and work of Jesus Christ, or our Redemption. Of this article nothing can be yielded or surrendered, even though heaven and earth, and whatever will not abide, should sink to ruin. 'For there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,' says Peter in Acts 4:12. 'And with His stripes we are healed,' (Is. 53:5). And upon this article all things depend which we teach and practise in opposition to the pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore, we must be sure concerning this doctrine, and not doubt: for otherwise all is lost, and the pope and devil and all things gain the victory and suit over us," (Triglott 461:5). This second part of the articles begins with a magnificent confession of the truth of our justification by faith; then proceeds to condemn the Roman errors contrary to it: the Mass, the Invocation of Saints, Chapters and Cloisters, and the Papacy.

Part three of the Smalcald Articles condemns the following Roman errors: Of Sin, Of the Law, Of Repentance, Of the Gospel, Of Baptism, Of the Sacrament of the Altar, Of the Keys, Of Confession, Of Excommunication, Of Ordination and the Call, Of the Marriage of Priests, Of the Church, How One is Justified Before God and Of Good Works, Of Monastic Vows, Of Human Traditions.

The Smalcald Articles concluded with a tract by Melanchthon on "The Power and Primacy of the Pope." This confessional statement declared that the power and primacy of the pope must be denied, since he teaches contrary to Christian doctrine and is the AntiChrist. This bold rejection of the visible head of the Church of Rome was made on the basis of Galatians 1:8, "Though an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." "We ought to obey God rather than men," (Acts 5:29). "... who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped, so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God," (II Thess. 2:3).

THE FORMULA OF CONCORD: The Formula has two parts, the Epitome and the

Thorough Declaration, each treating the same twelve articles. The introduction confesses the Scriptures as the only rule of faith and practice, and also accepts the Lutheran Confessions hitherto adopted.

Article I, ORIGINAL SIN: Rejects the exaggerations of Flacius (a statement by Flacius that original sin belonged to the substance of human nature, and was not a so-called accident).

Article II, FREE WILL: Rejects all synergism (the teaching that there are three cooperating causes in conversion --- God's Word, the Holy Ghost, and man's will not resisting the Word).

Article III, RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH BEFORE GOD: Stresses the forensic act and character of justification, and separates it from sanctification which follows justification.

Article IV, GOOD WORKS: Condemns the error that good works are necessary to salvation, and is against the error that they are harmful to salvation.

Article V, LAW AND GOSPEL: Rejects the confusion of Law and Gospel.

Article VI, THIRD USE OF THE LAW: Shows that the Christian still needs the Law for his old Adam, rejecting the error that Law (as set forth in the positive statements of the article) is not to be urged upon Christians.

Article VII, THE LORD'S SUPPER: Upholds the real presence in the Sacrament, received by all who use the Sacrament. Rejects the errors of the Sacramentarians, Calvin, Zwingli, and the papistic error of transubstantiation.

Article VIII, PERSON OF CHRIST: Rejects the errors of Nestorius, Eutyches, Arius, Marcion, Calvin, Zwingli, and Kenoticism (that all power was restored to Christ according to His divine nature at His resurrection and ascension, as if He had according to His divinity abandoned all power in His state of humiliation). Note: all the errors listed above are briefly defined in the Article, (Triglott 823:19ff).

Article IX, CHRIST'S DESCENT INTO HELL: Rejects the error of Aepinus of Hamburg that the whole Christ did not descend into hell to proclaim the victory.

Article X, CHURCH RITES: The Article deals with adiaphora, matters of indifference. It confesses all such to be wrong when they involve undue insistence on conformity, violate Christian liberty, or yield truth to the enemy.

Article XI, PREDESTINATION: Rejects the Calvin doctrine of reprobation, the error that teaches against the truth that salvation is due alone to God's grace --- damnation alone to man's fault.

Article XII, OTHER HERESIES: Condemns the Anabaptists, Schwenkfeldians (against justification by faith, the means of grace, infant baptism, etc.), New Arians (denying Christ as God), and the Anti-Trinitarians (the Father alone is properly and truly God).

It is obvious from this review of the contents of the Lutheran Book of Concord that the Lutheran Church, in her attitude towards truth and error, has been obedient to the Scriptures. The Confessions of the Lutheran Church underscore

true doctrine and reject all error. In the controversies which called forth the confessions, it would have been more expedient (humanly speaking) if the Lutheran Theologians had overlooked the differences in question and joined hands in the critical day in which they were living. But the genuine Lutherans of the day would not yield for a moment, that the truth of the Gospel might be upheld. They loved the truth and would not enter upon relations of church fellowship with those who espoused the untruth. Although many thought that only minor errors were involved, the Lutherans stated that "the controversies which have occurred are not, as some would regard them, mere misunderstandings or disputes concerning words," (Triglot 849).

Therefore the Formula of Concord, which settled the controversies, states: "From this our explanation, friends and enemies, and therefore everyone, may clearly infer that we have no intention of yielding ought of the eternal, immutable truth of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquillity, and unity ... still less are we inclined to adorn and conceal a corruption of the pure doctrine and manifest condemned errors. But we entertain heartfelt pleasure and love for, and on our part are sincerely inclined and anxious to advance, that unity according to our utmost power, by which His glory remains to God uninjured, nothing of the divine truth of the Holy Ghost is surrendered, no room is given to the least error, poor sinners are brought to true, genuine repentance, raised up by faith, confirmed in obedience, and thus justified and eternally saved alone through the sole merit of Christ," (Triglot 1095).

Because our Lutheran Confessions clearly set forth God's truth against error, we too profess that AS BELIEVERS WHO MUST OPPOSE ALL ERROR, WE WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUBSCRIBE TO THE LUTHERAN BOOK OF CONCORD.

Our Church of the Lutheran Confession, by the grace of God, has followed the confessional Lutheran Church in its attitude towards truth and error. God's Word is believed, taught, and confessed as the only religious truth for man, and the only truth that can save his soul. Faith worked by the Word of God must and will, therefore, reject all error!

By this same faith, same Spirit, same means of grace believers today witness the truth against error. It was this faith and concern that saw pastors, teachers, members, and congregations leave the fellowship of the Synodical Conference Lutheran Churches some 15-20 years ago. They took their stand upon the truth and made their bold confessions against the errors concerning Church Fellowship, and concerning Church and Ministry. The truth compelled separation from errors and errorists.

This same faith and concern has consumed much time and prayerful effort on the part of the members of the Church of the Lutheran Confession in searching the Scriptures, consulting together as brethren, and discussing so thoroughly the issues concerning the third use of the law, polygamy, and unionistic fraternal life insurance organizations. Nor will the need for confessing truth against error cease among us when these issues are settled!

In love for the Word of God, our faith must firmly confess the truth of God concerning these issues, and boldly condemn any and all errors that arise, be they ever so "insignificant" to the minds of men. Thus alone the true unity of the church is served, God is honored, and His truth is preserved among us. To this help us, dear Father in Heaven, Amen!